

THE
KINGDOM

OF 74 £. 40. 87

GOD among Men;

A TRACT

Of the Sound State

OF

RELIGION,

Or that Christianity which is described in the Holy Scriptures; And of the things that make for the Security and Increase thereof in the World; Designing its more ample diffusion among Professed Christians of all Sorts, and its surer Propagation to future Ages.

With the Point of Church-Unity and Schism Discuss'd.

By JOHN CORBET.

L O N D O N,

Printed for Thomas Parkhurst, at the Bible and Three Crowns at the Lower end of Cheapside. 1679.

not oblige accounts Lawfull, nor might indeed be
referred to a true primitive list for power, on
by publishing up some antiquated ceremonial, and
their their god gave no right, then from some
rich customs & Tradition. God will one day

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one day convince men, yt ye union of ye church lieth more
in ye unity of faith & affection, yⁿ in ye uniformity of
doubtfull rites & ceremonies. The band of Church-communi-

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on should be something ~~strong~~ common to strong & weak x^{an}s.
Certainly ye Primitive Church, yt did not charge men
faith wth such a load of articles, as now in these latter ages
men are charged wth, would much less burden men wth im-
posing doubtfull practices upon ym at ye ground of Church-
communion. And for publick forms of Divine service be they
who are most addicted to any one-forme, can never plead
it unlawful to amend it; w^{ch} others may, y^t it is not law-
full or convenient at least, to use it wthout such alterations.

Were there a spirit of mutual condescension (as in the
Primitive Church) our breaches as to y^s thing too might
soon be closed up, & ye vein of schisme be healed among us
no more. Such was ye prudence & temper of ye French
Church, in composing their publick forms of prayer,
yt they were for far from inserting any thing controversial
into ym, yt ye Lapists y^mph^{ed} would use ym, & inserted ym
into y^r own prayer-books. The same temper was used by
our Reformers in ye composing our Liturgy, in reference
to ye Lapists, to whom they had yⁿ an especial respect:
certainly those holy men, who did seek by any means to
draw in others, at such a distance from their principles as
ye Lapists were, did never intend by what they did for y^t
end, to exclude any truly tender consciences from their
communion. That w^{ch} they laid as a bait for ym, was never
intended by ym as a hook for those of their own professi-
on. But ye same ~~reason~~ reason w^{ch} at ye time made
ym gild for far to ym yⁿ, would now have y^m persuaded ym
to alter & lay aside those things w^{ch} w^old matter of offence
to any of ye same profession w^{ch} y^mph^{ed} now. And it
cannot but be looked upon as a token of Gods severe displea-
sure agst us, if any, tho unreasonable proposals of peace
between us & ye Lapists should meet wth such entertain-
ment among many; & y^t any fair offers of union & accom-
modation among our selves, be so coldly embraced & inter-
sented. Whether any shall succeed ye apostles in superiority
Turn over two leaves.

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THE PREFACE.



Disquisition concerning Religion and the State Ecclesiastical, wherein several Parties are vehemently carried divers ways, whether right or wrong, according to their different interests or apprehensions, is apt to stir up jealousy, and to meet with prejudice in a high degree, and therefore had need be managed as advisedly as sincerely. It is humbly craved, that the present management thereof may find a favourable reception so far as it hath in it self the evidence of its own Sincerity and Sobriety. This Treatise is not framed for a present occasion or any temporary design; but insists upon those things that concern the Church universally and perpetually. It aims at the ad-
A 3 vance

vancement of meer Christianity, and with respect to the common concerns thereof, it leaves the things that are more appropriate to the several Parties and Persuasions, to stand
.. or fall. It ingageth not in the controversies of these times, touching Forms of Church Government, but in any Form such depravations or deficiencies are blamed, as hinder the Power, Purity, Unity, Stability, or amplitude of Religion. Nothing prejudicial to Government, to the rights of Superiors, and Civil Pre-eminences, or to Decency, Unity, and Order in the Church, is here suggested. Sedition and Faction are evicted to be a contradiction to this Interest, which can hold its own only in those ways that make for the common good, both of Rulers and Subjects. Our design carries no other danger than the more ample diffusion of true Christianity, and the power of Godliness among men of all degrees, and the surer propagation thereof to future ages. Here be some things that are the vitals of
Christian

Christian Religion, and cannot be removed; and here be other things of conscientious or prudent Consideration, and let these so far pass, as they are found clear and cogent. I had .. rather be charged with any defect or weakness than with uncharitableness, and therefore am ready to renounce every line, and every expression in this Book, that cannot stand with true Christian Charity in the utmost extent thereof.

Let it not be taken amiss, that to obviate suspicion or prejudice I declare my self in the things here following. I am one aged in the Ministry, and by reason of age and experience am not eager for any Party, but mellowed with charity towards real Christians of all Parties. I have vehemently .. desired the union of the more moderate Dissenters, with the Established Order by reasonable accomodation, as for others that remain dissatisfied about such Union, yet believe and live as Christians, I do as earnestly desire an indulgence for them within such limits

as may stand with publick Peace and Safety. Though I am cast into the State of Nonconformity, yet I am willing to exercise the Ministry under the present Ecclesiastical Government, if I were made capable thereof by the relaxation of some injunctions.

- My principle is for a closing with things that are good and laudable in any Established Government, and for a bearing with things that are tolerable.
- And the Wisdom of the Governours of the Church will direct them to turn away from such Principles, Orders or Practices, as tend to the ruine or the great indangering of any Ecclesiastical Polity that retains them, whilst the Apostolick Doctrine (as it is now Established in the Church of England) is maintained.

in superiority of power over Presbiters, or all remaining governing ye Church in an equality of power, is no where determined by x^t in scripture. It being likewise fully acknowledged by ye schoolmen, ye ~~ap^l~~ are not superiour above Presbiters as to ye power of orders. The laying on of ye hands of ye Presbiters, is no way imperminently alledged, although we suppose s^t Paul to concur in ye action, (as it is most probable he did) because, if ye Presbiters had nothing to doe in ye ordination, to what purpose were their hands laid upon him? I believe upon ye strictest enquiry Medina's judgment

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A Book Intituled, *The Interest of England in matter of Religion, in Two Parts, formerly Published by the same Author.*

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 joined wth ye infallible of a moderate Bisho-
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 to Gospel Rules, have right, *The Errata. Authority*
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word & sacraments. It is not Innocent alone;
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A
TRACT
OF THE
SOUND STATE
OF
RELIGION, &c.

CHAP. I.

*The Nature of Christianity, and the
Character of true Christians.*



He Names and Titles, by
which real Christians are in
Holy Scripture distinguish-
ed from other men, are not
mean and common, but
high and excellent, as, a
Chosen generation, a royal
Priesthood, a holy Nation, a peculiar People,
the first-fruits of Gods creatures, the household of
God, children of Light, children of Wisdom,
heirs of the heavenly Kingdom, and the

B

Title

Title of *Saints*, was one of their ordinary appellations. Doubtless the true difference between them and others lyes not in mere names, but in some peculiar excellencies of quality and condition thereby signified. And so much is abundantly set forth in the several expressions of Christianity, as, *the Regeneration, the new Creation, a transformation in the renewing of the mind, a participation of the divine nature, the life of God, conformity to the image of the Son of God*, and such like. Thus from the Scripture stile it is evident, that true Christianity is of an other nature then that carnal, formal, and lifeless profession, with which multitudes confidently take up; and that in its true professors there must needs be found something of a higher strain and nobler kind; and which indeed makes them meet for that holy and Blessed state to come, unto which it leads them.

- It is indeed an excellent name and nature, the regenerate State and divine life, which is begun in the new birth, wherein the Soul retaining the same natural faculties, is changed from a carnal into a spiritual frame, by the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost, and the word of truth.
- In this change the mind is illuminated unto an effectual acknowledgment of *the truth which is after godliness*, as containing the highest good, and appearing in such evidence as makes earthly things to be seen (what they are indeed) but as dross

drofs and dung in comparifon thereof. The will is drawn by the force of the truth, acknowledged to an abfolute converfion and adhefion to God, as the great and ultimate object of the fouls love, defire, joy, reverence, obfervance, acquiefcence, zeal, and intire devotion. In this abfolute converfion to God, is included the renouncing of all felf dependence, and of that perverfe felf-seeking, which follows the lapsed ftate, and an unlimited felf refignation to God, which is the only true felf-seeking and felf-love. For God having made our felicity immutably coherent with his glory, but fubordinate thereunto, a true Convert turning from poor, empty, nothing, felf to the infinite God, exchanges infufficiency, poverty, vanity and mifery for immenfity, almightinefs, all-fufficiency and infinite fullnefs; and fo he lofeth felf, as it is a forry thing and a wretched Idol, and findeth the bleffed God, and felf-eternally bleffed in him.

And forasmuch as all have finned and fallen away from God, and cannot be brought back to him, but in the hand of a Redeemer and Reconciler, our Religion ftands alfo in the fenfible knowledg of fin, and of our deplorable ftate under the power and guilt thereof, with an humiliation futable thereunto; and in a lively faith towards our Lord Jefus, the eternal Son of God made man in the fulnefs of time, who gave himfelf for us to redeem us from fin

and death to a life of grace and glory. Which Faith is the worthy receiving of him in the full capacity of a Redeemer, the intire and hearty acceptance of the grace of God in him, the Souls resignation to him, to be conducted to God by him, and the securing of all that is hoped for in his hands, with an affiance in his all-sufficiency and fidelity.

This Faith worketh by love towards God and man. For through faith we love God, because he loved us first, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. And through faith we resolve, that if God so loved us, then ought we also to love one another. And this love eminently contains in it all the virtues of moral honesty towards men, as truth, justice, mercy, peaceableness, kindness, faithfulness, humility, meekness, modesty, and towards inferiors moderation, equity, and condescension, and towards Superiors reverence, and submission.

- Christianity is a root of true goodness that brings forth its fruit in due season, in the first place the internal and immediate actings of faith, hope and love, which may be called radical duties, as lying next the root; then the inseparable effects thereof, such as are holy meditation and prayer among the acts of devotion towards God; and among the acts of charity towards men, justice, fidelity, mercy, which are called the weightier matters of the Law.

And

And further, it shoots forth into an universal regard of Gods commandments in all particularities, not slighting the lowest or remotest duties, which indeed cannot be slighted without the contempt of that Authority, which enjoined the greatest and most important.

The Spirit of Christianity is a spirit of Wisdom and prudence, that guides in a perfect way. It sets right the superior governing faculties, and holds the inferior under the command and government of the Superior. It awakens reason to attend to the souls great concernments, to mind the danger of temptations, the madness of depraved affections, and the mischief and banefulness of all sin. It is no inconsiderate, licentious, presumptuous, dissolute spirit, but strict, circumspect and self suspicious, solid serious and universally conscientious. It is pure; grave, sober, shunning every unseemly speech, all foolish and light behaviour, and much more that which hath a filthy savour, and smells rank of impurity and dishonesty. It watcheth the motions of the animal life and sensitive appetite, and curbs them, when they are extravagant, and renounceth whatsoever things tend to vitiate the soul, and work it below its spiritual happiness. It is a spirit of patience, and of true rational courage, and of resolved submission to the will of God. It is above wordly riches and poverty, and glory and ignominy, and fleshly pain and pleasure. But self-conceit, excessive

self estimation, asperity towards others, and domineering cruelty over conscience, is no part of the above-mentioned and commended strictness and severity: For as it hates flattery and base compliance with others in prophane or lukewarmness, so it is ever qualified with meekness, lowliness of mind, peaceableness, patience, that it may gain upon others and win them to its own advisedness, steddiness, purity and soberness.

This new nature, while it is lodg'd in the earthly tabernacle, is clogg'd with many adverse things, especially the relicks of the old nature, which cause much vanity of thoughts, indisposedness of mind, motions to evil, and averasions from good, and sometimes more sensible disorders of affections, and eruptions of unruly passion, and aberrations in life and conversation. The same divine principal is in some Christians more firm, lively and active than in others, yet it is habitually prevalent in them all; and it resists and overcomes the contrary principle, even in the case of most beloved sins and strongest temptations, and perseveres in earnest and fearful indeavours of perfecting holiness in the fear of God. And whatsoever degree of sanctity is obtained, it ascribes wholly to the praise of Gods grace in Christ, and the power of his spirit.

Christianity being known what it is, it may easily be known what it is not, and so the false disguises

disguises of it may easily be detected. Forasmuch as it looks far higher than the temporal interests of mankind in the settlings of this life (though it doth not overlook them) it cannot be thought to have done its work in making men meerly just-dealers, good neighbours and profitable members of the Common-wealth, for such may be some of them that are without Christ, without the hope of the Gospel, and without God in the world. *service*

Moreover, it cannot lie so low, as in a bare belief of the Gospel, and an observance of its external institutes, accompanied with a civil conversation. As for such as rest in these things, what are they more in the eye of God, than the heathens that know him not? And wherein do they differ from them, except in a dead faith, and outward form taken up by education, tradition, example, custom of the country, and other such like motives.

Nor doth it lie in unwritten doctrines, and ordinances of worship devised by men, nor yet in curiosities of opinion or accidental modes of Worship, discipline, or Church-government; nor in ones being of this or that Sect or party, nor in meer Orthodoxy, all which being rested in, are but the false coverings of hypocrites.

It is not the lax and easie, slow and large rule, by which Libertines, and Formalists, yea some pretended perfectionists do measure their own

righteousness, who assert their perfectness by disannulling, or lessening the law of God.

- In a word, it is not any kind of morality or vertue whatsoever, which is not true holiness, or intire dedication to God; and therefore much less is it, that loose and jolly religion of the sensual gang, who keep up a superficial devotion in some external forms, but give up themselves to real irreligion and profaneness, and bid defiance to a circumspect walking and serious course of Godliness.

And now it is too apparent, what multitudes of them, that profess the faith of Christ, are Christians in name only and not indeed. Their alienation from the life of God, and their enmity against it, and their conformity to the course of this world in the lusts thereof, doth testify, that they have not received the grace of God in truth. But Christians indeed according to the nature of Christianity above expressed (which is now in them though not in the highest, yet in a prevalent degree) do make it their utmost end to know, love, honour and please God, to be conformable to him, and to have the fruition of him, in the perfection of which conformity and fruition, they place the perfection of their blessedness. In the sense of their native bondage under the guilt and power of sin, they come to the Mediator Jesus Christ, and rest upon him, by the satisfaction and merit of his obedience and suffering, to reconcile and

And sanctifie them to God, and accordingly they give up themselves to him, as their absolute Teacher and Ruler & all-sufficient Saviour. Having received not the Spirit of the world, but that which is of God, they are crucified to the honours, profits and pleasures of the world, and have their conversation in heaven, and rejoyce in the hope of glory, and prepare for sufferings in this life and by faith overcome them. The law of God is in their hearts, and it is the directory of their practice from day to day, by the touchstone of Gods word they prove their own works, and come to the light thereof, that their deeds may be made manifest to be wrought in God. They draw nigh to God in the acts of religious worship of his appointment, that they may glorifie him, and enjoy spiritual communion with him, and be blessed of him, especially with spiritual blessings in Christ; and as God is a Spirit, they worship him in Spirit and in truth. It is their aim, care and exercise to keep consciences void of offence towards God and towards men, and to render to all their dues both in their publick and private capacities, and to walk in love towards all, not excluding enemies, and to do all the good they can both to the souls and bodies of men; but those that fear God they more highly prize and favour. The remainder of corruption within themselves they know feelingly, and watch and pray, and strive that they enter not into tempta-

temptation, and maintain a continual warfare against the Devil the world and the flesh, under the conduct of Jesus Christ their Leader, according to the laws of their holy profession, with patience and perseverance. In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, they endeavour to be blameless and harmless as the Sons of God, and to shine as lights in the world, and by the influence of their good conversation to turn others to righteousness.

Such is the Character of those persons upon whose souls the holy doctrine of the Gospel is impressed, and in whom the Christian religion hath its real being, force and vertue. These are partakers of the heavenly calling, and set apart for God to do him service in the present world, and afterwards to live in glory with him for ever.

• • These are the true Church of God (the Church being here taken as mystical, not as visible) and these are all joyned together by one Spirit, in one Body under Christ their Head, in the same new nature, having one rule of their profession, and one hope of their calling.

These are a great multitude, which no man can number of all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues, yet hitherto not proportionable to the rest of mankind. And they continue throughout all ages, but in greater or lesser numbers, and more or less refined from Superstition or other corruptions, and more or less severed from the external communion of the

Anti-

Antichristian State, according to the brightness or darkness of the times and places wherein they live.

CHAP. II.

Things pertaining to the Sound State of Religion. And first holy Doctrine.

THE advancement of the Christian life, which hath its beginning in the new birth, being the great end propounded in this discourse, in reference to this end, the things here principally looked after are, the receiving and propagating of holy Doctrine, drawn out of the pure fountain of Sacred Scripture ; the right administration of true Gospel worship, by which God is glorified as God, and the worshippers are made more godly ; The due preaching of Gods word, and dispensation of other divine ordinances by persons lawfully called thereunto, for the conversion of sinners and edification of converts ; Holy discipline truly and faithfully administered by the Pastors, as the necessity of the Church requires, and the State thereof will bear ; Religious family government ; Private mutual exhortations, pious conferences and profitable conversation ; The predominant influence of religion in the civil government of a nation, yet without usurpation or incroachment

ment upon the civil rights of any, especially of the higher Powers; The unity of Christians and their mutual charity conspicuous and illustrious; and lastly, in order to all these intents a good frame of Ecclesiastical polity.

Holy Doctrine is the incorruptible seed of Regeneration, by which the new creature is begotten. It is not here intended to represent a perfect scheme thereof, for it sufficeth to signify that extracts thereof from holy Scripture, are drawn out in the ancient Catholik Creeds, and in the harmonious confessions of the present Reformed Churches. Nevertheless our design requires the observation of some most important things about the Doctrine of Salvation,

As that there be first an earnest and hearty belief of the existence and providence of God, and his government of mankind by laws congruous to their nature, and of the immortality of human souls, and of a life of retribution in the world to come; which is the foundation of all religion. .

2^{ly}. Right apprehensions of Gods nature and attributes, more especially of his Holiness comprehending as well his purity and justice, as his mercy and goodness; that as he is ready to procure his creatures happiness, and refuseth none that come unto him, so that he cannot deny himself, and that he receiveth none but upon terms agreeable to his Holiness.

3^{ly}. An *Idea* of Godliness in the mind not as shaped

shaped by any private conceptions, but as expressed by the Holy Ghost whose workmanship it is, that Christianity in the hearts and lives of men may be the same with Christianity in the Scriptures.

4. The receiving of the great mystery of Godliness, not as allegorized in the fancies of some Enthusiasts, wherein it vanisheth to nothing but as verified in the truth of the History, wherein it becomes the power of God to Salvation; and so not to sever the internal spirit of the Christian Religion, from its external frame, the *basis* whereof is the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Unity of the Godhead, and of the incarnation of the eternal word.

Lastly, Soundness of judgment in those great Gospel verities, that are written for the exalting of Gods grace, and the promoting of true godliness, and the encouraging of the godly, in opposition to ungracious, ungodly, and uncomfortable errors, of which sort are these following truths.

That the study and knowledge of the Scriptures, is the duty and priviledge of all Christians, that according to their several capacities, being skilfull in the word of righteousness, they may discern between truth and falsehood, between good and evil, and offer to God a reasonable service according to his revealed will.

That internal illumination is necessary to the saving knowledge of God, the Holy spirit in
that

that regard not inspiring new revelations, but inabling to discern savingly what is already revealed in nature and Scripture.

That man was created after the image of God in righteousness and true holyness; and that in this state he was indued with a self-determining principle called Freewill, and thereby made capable of abiding holy and happy, or of falling into sin and misery according to his own choice, and that God left him to the freedom of his own choice having given him whatsoever power or assistance was necessary to his standing.

That the first man being set in this capacity fell from God, and it pleased God not to annihilate him, nor to prevent his propagating of an issue in the same fallen state, which would follow upon his fall; but left the condition of mankind to pass according to the course of nature, being now fallen.

That by the sin of *Adam* all men are made sinners, and corrupt in their whole nature, and are under the curse of the Law, and liable to eternal condemnation, and being left to the wicked bent of their own wills, are continually adding to their original sin a heap of actual transgressions, and so are of themselves in a miserable and helpless condition.

That the Lord Jesus Christ according to his full intention and his Fathers commandment, hath made propitiation for the sins of the whole world, so far, as thereby to procure pardon of
sin

fin and Salvation of soul, to all that do unfeignedly believe and repent.

That man being dead in sin cannot be quickened to the divine life, but by the power of Gods grace, raising him above the impotency of lapsed nature.

That the culpable impotency of lapsed nature to saving good, lies in the fixed full aversion of the will, by a deplorable obstinacy nilling that good to which the natural faculties can reach, and ought to incline as to their due object.

That the root of godliness lies in regeneration and inward Sanctification.

That God calleth some by the help of that special grace which infallibly effecteth their conversion and adhesion to him, without any impeachment of the natural liberty of the will.

That whatsoever God doth in time, and in whatsoever order he doth it, he decreed from eternity to do the same, and in the same order; and so he decreed from eternity to give that special grace to some, and by it to bring them to glory, which decree is eternal election, to which is opposite the pure negative of Non-election. As for preordination to everlasting punishment it passeth not upon any, but on the foresight and consideration of their final abode in the state of sin.

That the more common convictions, inclinations

nations and endeavours towards God in persons unregenerate are good in their degree, and the ordinary preparative to a saving change, and they are the effects of that divine grace which is called common.

That diligent seeking after God by the help of common grace is not in vain, it being the means to some further attainment towards the souls recovery, and it is regarded of God in its degree, and God doth not deny men further degrees of help, till they refuse to follow after him, by not using the help already given them, and by resisting his further aid.

That God hath made all men savable, and though he doth not simply and absolutely will the conversion and Salvation of all, yet he wil- leth it so far, and in such manner as is sufficient to encourage the diligent in their endeavours, and to convict the careless of being inexcusable despisers of his grace towards them.

That there is an inherent righteousness, by which the faithful are truly named righteous, not only before men, but in the judgment of God himself; and which can be no more without good works then the sun without light.

That this is so perfect, as not to lack any thing necessary to the true nature of righteousness, nor to be maimed in any principal part thereof, though in respect of degrees and some accidental parts, it be imperfect.

That the faithful cannot by this inherent righte-

righteousness abide the strict tryal of divine justice, but they are acquitted from the guilt of sin, and their deserved punishment by the meer grace of God in Christ.

That Christs righteousness is so far bestowed on believers and made theirs, that in the merit, and consideration thereof they are freed from the curse of the Law, and the condemnation of hell, are justified unto eternal, life and adopted to the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom. And imputed righteousness in this sense cannot be gain-said.

That no faith is justifying, but that which works by love, and brings forth the fruit of good works.

That the condition of the new covenant for the remission of sins and everlasting life is faith alone, not as excluding repentance and new obedience, but as excluding the works of the Law, or legal covenant; and this is no derogation from the freest grace.

That the faithful keep the commandments of God and in some sense may be said to fulfill the Law, that is not in the strictness of the covenant of works, but in the observance of duty without reserves, in the sincerity of love towards God and man, as the Scripture saith, *love is the fulfilling of the Law.*

That obedience every way perfect is required of the faithful as their duty, but not under the penalty of eternal death, yet under that penalty

they are obliged to sincere obedience.

That good works have relation to eternal life as the means to the end, in that manner, as the seed to Harvest, as the race and combat to the Prize, as the work to the Reward; not according to equality or condignity, or merit strictly so called, but according to free compact or congruity.

That the faithfull may be assured of their own justification by a true fixed persuasion, that excludes hesitation and suspense, and causeth holy security, peace and joy; and that they ought to labour for such assurance, which ariseth partly from the divine promises, and partly from the sense of their own inseigned faith.

- That though godliness stands not in absolute perfection, yet it stands in that integrity of heart and life, an indubitable evidence whereof cannot be had without a very carefull and close walking with God, and continued earnest endeavours of perfecting holiness in his fear.

That all human actions must have an actual or habitual reference to Gods glory, and that all things are to be done in the best manner for that end.

That notwithstanding the power of divine grace, which works mightily in Gods chosen, whosoever will be saved must watch and pray and strive, and bestow his chiefeft care and pains therein, and so continue to the end, and particularly

cularly in the constant exercise not of a Popish, outside, formal, but a Spiritual and real mortification, and self denial in continual dependance on Gods grace, *who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure.*

In the positions aforegoing, all nice, obscure, perplexed and unnecessary notions are avoided, and the plain sense of Gospel doctrine is attended. This simplicity and plainness makes the truth much more intelligible, and less controvertible, where a multitude of nice terms and notions are vain and hurtfull superfluities, that muffle the truth, and cloud mens judgments and multiply controversies, and cause much confusion.

CHAP. III.

The due ordering of Gospel Worship.

FOrasmuch as divine Worship, is the first and nearest act of Piety, and aims immediately at the glorifying of Gods name, and the keeping of the soul devoted to him, the due ordering thereof must needs be one of the highest concernments of true religion. Whereupon such an order thereof must needs be most desirable, as hath most tendency to exalt the honour of Gods name, and to advance the souls pure devotion. And doubtless

that hath most tendency thereunto, which is most according to the nature and will of God.

- Notwithstanding the fetches of mens wit in commending their will-worship, God best knows, what service will please him best, and
- do us most good. It becomes us, neither to contemn Gods authority in the neglect of his institutions, nor to controule his wisdom in the addition of vain inventions. And this will bring us into the way of a reasonable service, most acceptable to God and profitable to our selves.

- In the fulness of time our Lord Christ, being to establish a more perfect way, than what had been before, lays this foundation, *God is a Spirit and they that worship him, must Worship him in Spirit and truth.* Accordingly he antiquated the old legal form, great in outward furniture and visible spendor, but comparatively small in substance and inward power; and instituted an other of a far different strain, wherein the rituals and externals are few and plain, but their substance and inward power
- is great and mighty. And when he abrogated former things, which for their time had the stamp of divine authority, because they suited not with the Gospel state, and were in a comparative sense called, *carnal ordinances that were not good*; doubtless it was not his mind and will, that men should erect new frames of their own devising after the similitude of those old things,
- that

that are passed away. To worship God in the Spirit after the simplicity that is in Christ, according to the Gospel dispensation, as it is most agreeable to the nature of the divine Majesty, which is Worshipped, and best fitted to glorifie him as God indeed; so it is also most efficacious to make the Worshippers more knowing in religion, more holy and heavenly in Spirit and conversation, and every way more perfect in things pertaining to life and godliness. page:

Irreverence, rudeness, sordidness, or any kind of negligence in the outward service of God, is not here commended under the simplicity and Spirituality of Gospel worship. Due regard must be had to all those matters of decency, the neglect whereof would render the Service undecent; such as are convenient places of assembling commonly called Churches, comely furniture and convenient utensils therein, a grave habit not of special sanctity, but of civil decency for a Minister, all which should not be vile and beggarly but gracefull and seemly; likewise a well composed countenance and reverent gesture, is requisite in all that present themselves before the Lord. Sitting or lolling or covering the head, or having the hat half-way on in prayer, is among us unseemly, except natural infirmity call for indulgence herein: but laughing, talking, gazing about in our attendance on religious exercises, is no better than profaneness; and to come into the

- congregation walking with our hats on our heads, is by custom taken for irreverence and incivility, and therefore to be avoided as offensive. All matters of necessary decency, are in their generals of the Law of nature, and in the particulars to be ordered by human prudence.

All natural expressions of devotion, as kneeling, and lifting up of the hands and eyes in prayer, are allowed by all sorts. We call them natural because nature it self teacheth to use them, without any positive institution divine or human; and a rational man by the meer light of nature is directed to use them, yet not without some government and discretion. For herein nature it self is subject to some variety, and is in part determined and limited by the custom of several ages and countries, as for instance, in the prostration of the body in the act of adoration, in the wearing of Sackcloth, and renting of clothes in time of great humiliation, which in former ages were futable, and that according to nature, but not now adays in regard of the variation of custom. And I suppose that in this sense St. *Paul* speaks against wearing of long hair as contrary to nature.

- But there hath been much controversy about such Ceremonies as contribute nothing to the aforesaid necessary decency, and are no natural nor civil and customary expressions of reverence and devotion, but are of hu-

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man institution and of a mystical and meerly instituted signification, and made visible stated signs of Gods honour, and the immediate expressions of our observance of him, and obligation to him, and by some supposed to be not meer circumstances, but parts of divine Worship; and yet more especially if they be designed in their use, for that significancy and moral efficacy that belongs to Sacraments, and made no less then the Symbols of our Christianity. It lies not on me to determine on either side in this controversie; nevertheless it is easie to apprehend this, that it can be no danger nor damage to be sparing in those things, which being at least doubtfull and unnecessary, have turned to endless strife and scandal between those that own the same doctrine of Faith, and the same Church Communion. Likewise it can do no hurt to reformed Christianity, not to insist on that latitude in devised rites of worship, that will acquit the greatest part of the Ceremonies used in the Church of *Rome*, from the charge of Superstition, and which makes way for the oppressing of the Churches, and the sinking of religion under a luggage of unprofitable institutions. ••

To make any thing necessary and commanded of God, which he hath not commanded, and to damn any thing as forbidden by him, which he hath left indifferent, and to dread lest God should not be pleased, unless we do some things

- which we need not do, and lest he should be displeased, when we do somethings not forbidden, is no doubt the crime of Superstition; but it is not the whole extent of that sin. For it is no less Superstition to feign God to be pleased with mens vain inventions, yea though they be not injoynd or observed as divine precepts; and this also is, *to teach for Doctrines the commandments of men.* And who are the greater controlers of Gods wisdom, and usurpers
- upon his authority? They that fear to do what
 - God hath allowed, supposing it to be forbidden, or they that presume to add their own inventions for the bettering of his service, and make the omission thereof as criminal, as the neglect of divine ordinances? Doubtless it is a more tolerable Superstition to be over solicitous and scrupulous, about the commandments of God, than to be over-confident and vehement in the unwarrantable or questionable traditions of men.
 - Human devices multiplied in Gods worship, ingender to much vanity and superstition in the zealous observers of them, and are apt to extinguish the inward life of Godliness, as rank weeds choak the corn; and they are commonly made a Cloak to real ungodliness.
 - And if some of them were first introduced with pious intention, yet they are commonly maintained and multiplied to serve a carnal Interest.
 - And they are the more easily entertained and observed,

served, because it is easie to the flesh to buy out the inward Service of God and the subjection of the inward man, by superficial bodily exercise. But the depretiating of these devices, serves to pluck off the mask of hypocrisie, made up of meer formalities, and to invigorate the life and spirit of true Religion.

To be *the Ministration of the Spirit*, is the excellling glory of the Gospel Ministration, wherewith a grave and sober decency and comely ornament doth well accord; but excessive gaudiness, pompous and theatrical shews, various gesticulations, and affected postures, are vanities too much detracting from its dignity and spiritual Majesty.

CHAP. IV.

The due dispensation of Gods word.

WHEN our Lord Jesus *ascended up on high*, he gave gifts unto men, appointing and furnishing Spiritual Officers for the Service of his Kingdom, some extraordinary and temporary, as *Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists*; others ordinary and successively perpetual, as *Pastors and Teachers*. Wherefore the interest of Christianity lies much in a right Gospel Ministry, which is sutable and servicable to our Lords design, and the ends of his Gospel. And it is a
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Ministry, which is pure and uncorrupt, dispensing *the truth as it is in Jesus*, whereby men are brought to sound faith and true holiness; man- which is vigorous and powerful, apt to take hold of the conscience and reach the heart; take which is solicitous and laborious, *travelling in birth till Christ be formed in the hearers* and can *the Man-child the new creature* be born into the world; which is assiduous and instant in preaching the word, by instruction, reproof and comfort, that as much as in it lies, it may present every man perfect in Christ; which comes with full Scripture evidence and cogent reason, with solid matter in stile and language not negligent, much less undecent, yet not too curious and elaborate, but free, vehement, grave, serious and fit for the work in hand, which is not to tickle ear, but to break open the heart; which is exemplary in faith, purity, charity, self-denial and contempt of the world; and finally which is not mercenary, but naturally cares for the state of the flock, and accommodates it self thereunto, as its great charge and chief concern. And *who is sufficient for these things*, saith the great Apostle! Doubtless much wisdom and grace is needfull, in an *able Minister of the new Testament, and a Workman that needs not to be ashamed.*

It being pre-supposed that he *holds fast the form of Sound words*, and that he is thoroughly instructed in the mystery of Godliness, which
he

dis- he is to impart to others, in the first place, his
 enprudence will be concerned for the judicious
 ess; management of the dispensation committed to
 ke him. A prudent dispenser of the word, will
 rt; take care to deliver nothing to others, but what
 in is very intelligible to himself; and whereof he
 nd can make good sense, and render a reason to
 he those that ask it. He doth not trifle with holy
 h- things, he shuns vanity and curiosity, and doth
 n- not ramble into impertinences, and cares not to
 nt utter any thing for ostentation. He hath in his
 es eye the end of his Ministry, and the usefulness
 a, and importance of what he hath to communi-
 r- cate, that (as it said of the Scripture from
 s whence he takes it) *it may be profitable for*
 - *Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for in-*
 t *struction in Righteousness*, that it may come
 home to the hearts and lives of men, and be fit
 to raise their attention by their own concern-
 ment in it. He considers withall what the hear-
 ers can best receive, that is, not what the flesh
 can well digest (for then the most necessary
 truths must be forborn) but that which carries
 its own evidence, to that it must be owned,
 or the gain-sayers must be self-condemned. And
 this is to prepare mens minds, and to make way
 for such harder sayings and stricter precepts, as
 must be manifested in due season.

Moreover the Dispensation of the word of
 God should be, as the word it self is, *quick and*
powerfull, and in all reason that is to be most
 esteem-

esteemed such, which is most apt to be effectual to the end, for which God hath ordained it, which is *to open mens eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them, that be sanctified through faith in Christ.* That kind of preaching that hath most tendency to convince, direct and move toward this end, is without controverſie the most powerfull.

The preſſing of Doctrines with ſolid and cogent reaſon, provided they be made plain and obvious to the capacity of the hearers, appertains to this manner of preaching, and is a chief point therein. Strong reaſon may be ſo delivered as to be too hard, and ſtrong for plain people to receive and digeſt it. Here Condeſcention is a great Duty, and perſpicuity a great Gift. But the bare evidence of reaſon doth not all. For to gain the Will (which is the man) beſides the judgment, the fancy and affections had need be gained. We find it the condeſcention of God himſelf in his word, to deal very much with theſe lower faculties, which belonging not to brutes only, but to men alſo, it is not brutiſh but human, to be moved by them in ſubordination to the judgment. Even the moſt learned and prudent men, are found to take no ſmall impreſſion from them; and therefore the moſt proper ways of ſoliciting and exciting them, are not to be neglected, much leſs condemned.

temned. Now dry reason though strong enough, is not so fit to take the affections or raise the fancy. Wherefore some other helps, among which there are comparatively little things, are herein used, as familiar expressions, apt similitudes, expostulations, lively representations, and such like; to which may be added a voluble tongue, a moving tone, and taking gesture. And though much noise and action make not a powerfull Preacher; yet earnestness of speech and elevation of the voice, is not of little force, and especially with vulgar hearers, who being the greatest number in most Auditories, are very regarable.

And truly the weight of the business requires due fervour. Should the matters of life and death eternal be delivered without feeling, as by men half asleep? And people's drowsiness doth no less require it. Yea, possibly the apprehensions and affections of the common people may better be roused up, by a somewhat boisterous way of excitation; which for this reason should not displease the learned or most judicious sort, who are in this case to consider not what would most affect themselves, but the greater multitude, who stand in greatest need of help, and whose souls are not less precious, nor redeemed with a lesser price, than the souls of the greatest Scholars, and Sages of this world.

Indeed much judgment and and circumspection

spection is here called for, that all rudeness and homeliness of expression, all curiosity, levity and loathsom affectation, and all manner of undecency be avoided ; and that what is comely and congruous and apt to convince and move be used, and that nothing be overstrained. And in this matter self-distrust, if not too excessive, will do better than Self-confidence and conceitedness.

Here it should be considered, that very worthy men may have some indecencies in voice and gesture, which they cannot well remedy ; and others, who are very usefull, and whose Service in Gods Church could not be well spared, may be liable to some lesser mistakes and incongruities in expression, which critical hearers may discern, yet they hinder not the efficacy of the word. And withall let it be considered, whose work they do, that aggravate such weakneses to make sport for themselves, and others to the contempt of Gods ordinance. And for them that pour out scorn upon the most Pious, Serious, Solid and profitable kind of Preaching, and make ridiculous representations of it to the world, because it suits not their seeming wisdom ; I am rather inclined to lament their folly, then to emulate their Wit, or envy their Applause with some men. We read that the wise Preacher *sought out acceptable words*, that is words pleasing to edification, that would reach home and were piercing as goads and nails.

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The Preachers inward feeling of what he speaks, hath a secret force to cause his words to be felt by others, and what comes from the heart is aptest to go to the heart, by a Sympathy in the Spirits of men. And that any should speak of *Seeing* and *Feeling* in some sort, the things that are written in Gods word, will not seem strange to them who *have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

The powerfull dispensing of the word depends chiefly on the assistance of the Holy Spirit, though both natural and acquired parts, and the industrious exercise thereof be likewise necessary. For which cause the spiritual man hath unspeakable advantage of the meerly natural man in this Service. The special presence of the Spirit with him and the grace of God in him, causeth him to speak in a strain more apposite, and sutable to the forming of the new creature. Yea, such illumination and conviction and tast of heavenly things, as proceeds from a more common, or less than regenerating grace, will do more in this business with less abilities of art and nature, than far greater abilities in those kinds can do by themselves alone. *The common Sense of the faithfull*, is a witness to the truth hereof. And it must needs be so, that he who hath some savour of the things of God, should speak more Savorily of them, then he can, to whom they are tasteless or unsavory.

Wherefore there is a Spiritual kind of preaching

ing not indeed opposite to rational, nor taken so to be by any that talk of it with understanding, though the Assertors of it have been abusively personated, as holding such a dotage. They do not say, that the Spirit shews any thing about the sense of Scripture or divine matters, which is not consonant to right reason, or that whatsoever is darted into their mind, is to be taken for an irradiation from the Holy Ghost, or that any may presume upon the Spirits immediate help, in the neglect of rational search and Study. But their meaning is, that as heretofore in extraordinary persons there were extraordinary inspirations; so there have been, are, and always shall be, the ordinary teachings and inspirations of the Spirit; in regard whereof it is stiled in Scripture *the Spirit of wisdom and revelation*, which teaching as all the Faithfull stand in need of, so more especially the Ministers of the Gospel; and that this divine assistance doth elevate, or heighten the gifts of nature and learning, and guides us to sound reasoning, yea, and sometimes brings things into the mind without previous reasoning, yet rational and found to be so upon due Scanning. There is no great evidence in reason, that St. Pauls demonstration of the Spirit and power, is to be restrained to the miraculous confirmation of his Doctrine, or any extraordinary gift (though that sense be not excluded.) For the contexture of his discourse in that Chapter, sets forth

forth a certain faculty, perceptive and expressive of the things of the Spirit of God, belonging unto spiritual men as such. And they are no *Fanaticks*; that to this day own the more common interpretation of the words, namely to Preach from the special help of the illuminating and quickning Spirit, with a lively perception and feeling of the things that are delivered. But whatsoever the meaning of those words be, verily they are besotted with reason, that in the pride thereof regard not this illumination from above, and scoff at those that look after it.

To Preach Christ is the matter of this dispensation, and to Preach moral duties is not extraneous to the Preaching of Christ, but comprized under it. Yet it must be acknowledged, that *mortality* in its best estate (as it is vulgarly taken for temperance and righteousness towards men, and other vertues of that rank, as proceeding from a meerly natural principle, which an *Aristotle* might describe in his *Ethicks*) is far below Christianity. For it is found in many that are alienated from the life of God, and lead meerly by the Spirit of this world. But this name may be given to some higher thing, as first, to the whole observation of Gods moral law founded in our Creation, and that not only in the outward work after a common manner performable by the unregenerate, but in a due manner from a right principle to a right end,

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that

that is from the love of God unto his glory. And in this sense we acknowledge that it is a great part, but not the whole of the Christian Religion; nor indeed the whole of morality taken not vulgarly, but Theologically, and that in its full extent. For so taken, it is no other then the conformity of our minds and actions to God and his laws, and faith in Christ, is a main part thereof.

Indeed to preach Christ, is to preach the whole Duty of man, and more especially those duties that are consequent to, and founded in our redemption; as also to set forth the whole mystery of the Gospel, which is the ground and reason of our duty. For God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and accordingly hath ordained the Ministry of reconciliation, by which there is made known the lapsed and lost estate of mankind, the abundant grace of God in Christ for their recovery, remission of sins, and free justification through his righteousness, regeneration and inward sanctification, the inhabitation of the spirit in believers, and their mystical union with Christ, their living by the faith of him, and deriving of spiritual life and strength from him, and growing up into him, *till they be filled with all the fulness of God in him*, their spiritual warfare and conflicts between the flesh and spirit within them, their temptations, desertions and renewed consolations, and the earnest and sealing of the Holy Spirit

Spirit given unto them. Surely these are fit Subjects to be handled by a Gospel Preacher, though the Preaching of these matters or of many of them, is by some called *Canting and phrase Divinity*; yet they are the Sacred expressions of the Holy Ghost in Scripture. And dare any say they are but a sound of words without matter agreeable to the Stile? No, they are real and deep mysteries, and intelligible to them that obey the truth. It is heartily here asserted and earnestly contended for, that the Gospel calls us as much to vertue as to glory, and that its true intent is to reduce us to a holy life: yet withall, the Counsel of God therein is to set forth the glory of his free grace, the all-fulness of Jesus Christ, and the mighty working of his Spirit, and the wonderfulness of Salvation through him, to the intent that we might glory, not in our selves but in him, *who of God is made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption.*

And indeed, who do more powerfully and successfully preach Christian duty, than they that most insist on this unspeakable grace, and lay open the treasures thereof? The love of Christ is so to be spoken of, as to beget in us a love towards him, not imaginary and conceited, but real and substantial, made good by an entire subjection to him. And therefore the Doctrines of *free grace* and of *good works* are to be sounding together in our Pulpits. What

Christ hath done for us is not to save us the pains of a continual mortification, and of the agony to be endured therein, and of aspiring to the most perfect state of holiness that is attainable. We are to live as strictly as if we were to be saved by the perfection of our own obedience. And indeed none lead more holy lives than they, that desire to be found in Christ, and when they have done all that they can, rely wholly upon the mercy of God in him.

- It is most true that Gospel mysteries do not lie in meer Phrases, nor is new matter always brought with new forms of speech, nor are people much the wiser by having their heads filled
- with them. There are empty sounds and terms unintelligible, swelling words with windy notions, expressions that seem to draw deep, whose
- meaning is but shallow. There is a solicitous stating of points with a seeming exactness, that is indeed weak and injudicious, and a niceness in distinguishing, which is but frivolous. Many controversies much agitated are but a strife of words, and too great stress is often laid upon
- little fancies. And a greater mischief there is, that in cloudy language pernicious doctrines take shelter, and dangerous Sects are known to hide themselves in this covert. And therefore he that doth his work rightly, will know the true significancy and import of what he utters. He vents not meer words, but sound matter and good substance; for the souls of men are fed
with

with solid sense and not with phrases.

Howbeit as touching expressions, there is a certain Spiritual strain, which is most agreeable to the things of the Spirit of God, and which as coming from life and Spirit, is better discerned than described. There is a speaking, *not in words which mans wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.* And though this more eminently took place in the Apostles, and such other extraordinary persons, yet there is no sufficient reason to restrain it to them alone. St. *Paul* may well be understood to speak of this as a gift received by them, that had received not the Spirit of the world, but that which is of God, and as something suted to the perception and taste of all Spiritual men. It doth not exclude the use of human wisdom, though the wisdom of the Spirit sway in chief. For no doubt, even *Paul's* human learning and prudence was herein serviceable, though in subserviency to the influence and conduct of the Spirit. This Spirituality of expression, is conformable to that of the Spirit of God in Scripture, though not confined to the words thereof. Surely the mysteries of Salvation cannot be better handled; than in those terms in which they were first delivered, to wit, in Scripture expressions, or others consonant thereto, solidly and pertinently used, and to call this *canting*, savours to much of that Spirit, to which holy language is unsavory.

Without controversie, the strongest reason is of greatest force to gain the wills of men, to imbrace true Religion. For that which crosseth sensuality, selfishness and all the depraved appetite of our lapsed nature (as Religion doth) must needs have its greatest strength, next under the power of divine grace, in the force of right reason. But care and skill is requisite, that it be so prepared, offered, and set home, that it may be sutable to them that should receive it, and that the cogency thereof may so reach unto, and fasten upon their judgments, as to gain their wills. Philosophical ratiocinations are too remote not only from low and dull capacities, but also from the greater part of them, that are competently apprehensive and intelligent, and so being too much estranged from them, they do not touch them to the quick. A familiar, natural, plain and obvious way of reasoning comes home to all men, and is most felt at the heart, and that by Scholars themselves, though their intellect may be more delighted in more accurate or reserved Speculations.

Scriptural preaching is indeed the most rational, as coming with such reason as is of greatest force with men in matters of Salvation. For Gods written word is a treasure of divine wisdom, that thoroughly furnisheth the man of God. Besides, the infallible testimony thereof hath more authority, than Philosophical reason, though

though sound and true, can have, upon Christian hearers; and it peirceth deeper and sticks closer. And arguments taken, and words spoken from Scripture, wherewith the people converse dayly, are more easily apprehended and retained; and so are more instructive, and every way more usefull than other reasonings. Though numerous citations of sentences out of human Authors be an unprofitable kind of ostentation; yet the Sentences of Holy Writ, which is the evidence of our Christian hope, and the testimony of him, who is truth it self, are most effectual to edification. And whosoever is able to speak reason in divine matters, is to make a rational use of Scripture: and if any quote it impertinently and absurdly, it is through defect of reason, and they would be as injudicious in their Sermons without those quotations.

But nice and haughty wits mostly cavil without cause, and charge profitable Preachers with injudicioufness, meerly through their own vain curiosity and inconsiderateness. Scripture quotations are sometimes used by way of allusion, or for illustration, not for strict proof; and that which is brought for proof, if it be not full and cogent, yet it may add some weight, and then it is not abused. Besides, if a passage be used in a sound and pious, though not in its proper sense, it is pardonable. It is fit indeed that in citing Texts, we know their true import, and go more by weight than number, shunning

- impertinency and superfluity ; yet it is not unfit to note, that all sound and good Preachers are not alike judicious, and those that are very solid may be guilty of some oversights : and 'tis a bad matter that their Ministry, which God hath owned and honoured with good success in his Service, should be set at nought for a few mistakes (perhaps more pretended than real) about the sense of some Scripture, when it is not applied otherwise than the Analogy of faith will bear, and nothing is defended but known truth. I have known a pious but
- x.. strangely mistaken sense of a Scripture sentence cast into the mind, and there fixed to have been the first occasion of seriousness in Religion, to one that afterward lived and dyed a godly
 - .. Christian. Now that which was causal in this conversion was the godly truth it self, which was written in Gods word ; and the mistaking it to lie in such a sentence where it did not, being but accidental, was no hinderance. I do in no wise countenance the irrational use of Scripture, but am sensible of the importance of good judgment and due care about the sense thereof : yet I cannot approve the scornful haughtiness of some men, who deride godly persons well instructed in the Scripture, as having nothing but words and Phrases and senseless notions ; either because they come short of Scholar-like exactness, or because they speak of the things of God in a more Evangelicall and Spiritual strain,
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than these can well bear.

In speaking, the best use of art is to speak to best purpose, and for that end, in divine matters to speak with greatest Majesty and authority. And this is done not by ostentation of wit, by puerile and effeminate rhetorications, by a rapsody of flanting words, by starched speech, by cadency of sounds, or any too elaborate politeness, that please the shallow fancy, but by the evidence of reason set forth in a masculine and unaffected Eloquence, that hath power over the wills of men, which are tough and knotty peices.

Perspiciuity is a great vertue and felicity in discourse, for hereby what is offered gains attention, and enters the mind, and abides therein: but intricacy and obscurity is a bar to its entrance and entertainment. Hereunto an easie and obvious method, evident coherence, and plainness of expression conduceth mainly.

Wherefore he that minds what he hath to do, is not careful by a more curious artifice to please the fancies of some itching hearers, but hath most regard to that composure, that makes most for a general benefit and edification. And for this cause as he would not multiply words without need, and become tedious; so he would not be too succinct and close; and by that means either too dark, or too quick to inform or effect the people. In vulgar auditories a dilating

lating of the matter is most necessary, so that idle tautologies and prolixity be avoided: and it may be spread forth in such fulness and plainness of speech, as will not be unacceptable even to Scholars, that are not wise in their own conceit. But the careless and confused speaking of incoherent and undigested matter, rudeness or baldness of expression is no part of this commended plainness, which is orderly, comely and weighty, agreeable to the Majesty of Gods word.

A true Preacher of the Gospel rightly divides the word of truth, and gives to all their portion. He doth not make distinction, where the rule of faith makes no difference, nor doth he confound things, that ought to be distinguished. He is not partial towards parties for interest or affection. And so he doth not promiscuously justifie or condemn the evil and the good together on any side; but as he accounts it an odious thing to rail upon one party in the ambiguous terms of false Church, false Worship, false Ministry, Idolatry, Superstition, Formality: so he accounts it no less odious, confusedly to inveigh against those of an other persuasion, under the no less ambiguous terms (as they are now commonly used) of Hypocrites, Pharisees, Fanaticks, Enthusiasts, Separatists, Humorists and such like.

He is constant in Preaching the word, instant in season and out of season. For in Preaching
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ing frequently, he doth not do the work of the Lord negligently, but duely feeds the flock, and that with better prepared food, than they use to bring that Preach but seldom upon pretence of greater preparation.

He watcheth over the flock with diligence, and naturally cares for their estate; for he knows the worth of precious souls. He condescends to persons of low degree, and is concerned for the souls of the poor and simple and illiterate, as well as of the noble, rich and learned; for he knows their Redeemer paid alike dear for both. And however the proud and covetous judge, he doth not think it below him to intermeddle, for the reducing of the simple that go astray, and he seeks to recover them with gentleness and patience; for he prefers the gaining of one Soul, before all the preferments of this world.

He earnestly looks after that, which some do little regard, to wit *the Seal of his Ministry* in the saving efficacy thereof on the hearers, and when he finds it, he makes it the crown of his rejoycing. And this Seal he takes not to be their meer owning of Sound doctrine, or following an Orthodox party, much less their abounding in notions, their talking and outward Guarb of profession; but their new birth or their Spiritual growth, the promoting whereof is the scope of his labours, and the dayly travell of his Soul.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

The due performance of Publick Prayer.

PRayer being a main part of Gods worship and chief act of devotion, and such as doth accompany and Sanctifie every other Religious duty, and the publick management thereof pertaining to the work of the Ministry; its due performance must needs be of no small import to the increase of true Piety, and no small part of the Ministerial excellency and sufficiency.

Among Spiritual gifts, I doubt not to number *the gift of Prayer* also, and I judge they speak too low of it, that make it only a natural gift, or acquired by practice and imitation. Much indeed may lie in natural parts, and observation and exercise, but not all; for over and above these things, the Spirit of Christ presiding perpetually over his Church sets in, and by a secret influence on men designed of God for this service, indues them with a peculiar aptness of knowledge and utterance, as well in Prayer as Preaching, for the edifying of the Church. And some unsanctified persons being thus gifted, may preach and pray with a notable tendency to the saving of others, when themselves prove cast-aways. Private Christians also according to their measure, are parta-

partakers of this gift in much diversity of degrees, God giving to every man severally as he will.

Besides this, there is a special and saving gift, *the Spirit of Prayer*, and *Praying in the Holy Ghost*, or by his gracious assistance in a holy manner, according to the will of God, which is indeed lively and powerfull, and apt to kindle a holy fervour in them, that joyn in the service so performed. And why that, which is performed in such a manner, and by such assistance, may not be called a praying by the Spirit, I see no reason. They who thankfully acknowledge and bless God for so great a gift of his grace, do not intend thereby a miraculous inspiration, or an absolute infallible guidance of the Holy Ghost. Much less do they think .. that their prayers are such dictates of the Spirit, as would infer that the very matter and words thereof, being written would become Canonical Scripture, to which is requisite not only an infallible Spirit, but also an attestation thereof by the same Spirit, sufficient to convince others. But this they maintain, that the Spirit helps .. x them against their indisposedness of mind, and deadness of heart, and manifold infirmities, and strengthens their faculties, and quickens their graces, and enlarges their desires, and elevates their souls, and brings things to their remembrance, specially the divine promises, yea, and in some particulars may guide the heart and tongue

- tongue by a present immediate suggestion. For why must the Spirit of God be thought to do less in exciting to good, then the Devill ordinarily doth in prompting to evil? And yet they are not to depend on the Spirits immediate suggestion, for matter, words and method, without
- taking care or thought before hand. It is an ordinary and not miraculous assistance which they expect, and which is usually given according to mens preparations, and suited to their several capacities.

The Spirit of Prayer is not confined to this, or that exterior frame or order of Prayer; but is ever found there, where the heart hath a due sense of the matter. A particular form, whether stinted or not stinted is not of the essence of Prayer, but only its outward shape, and it pertains to it not as it is a Sacred thing, but as an action in general; and for that no action can possibly be performed but in some particular mode, this holy action cannot otherwise be performed. And whereas there are divers modes thereof, they may be used as they are congruous to the substance of the duty according to mens choice and judgment, unless they were (as indeed they are not) bound up to one by a divine determination.

- The lawfulness of Set-Forms is further evinced from the Lords Prayer, and other forms in Scripture, and as much is owned by the general custom of singing *Dauids* Psalms. Wherefore
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to turn the back upon the publick Prayers of the Church, meerly because performed in this manner, is unwarrantable.

And there is a little warrant to restrain all publick Prayer to a stinted Liturgy, and leave no liberty at all to the Ministers godly zeal and prudence.

In this particular, the interest of true godliness will be much better advanced by moderation, than by contests and rigor on either hand. For it is very discernable, that the Antipathy against either way, is mainly caused by the animosity and mutual opposition, between the parties of different persuasions and inclinations in this matter. They are too weak and ill-advised at least, if not humorous and self-conceited, that reject all Sett-Forms: and on the other hand to suppress the gift of Prayer in our selves or others, is to sin against the grace of God and to hinder much good. The use of a Set-Form without an imperious restraint of Prayer thereto, will obviate the objection of *Stinting the Spirit*, which means (if there be any thing to the purpose in that Phrase) a suppressing or undue restraining of this Spiritual gift, against which a caution is here given.

In our addresses to the great God it concerns us to look well both to thoughts and words, that in both he may be Sanctified by us, and glorified as God indeed. And in our publick addresses to him a more special care must be had,
that

that nothing be uttered before him, that is unmeet to be offered to his dreadfull Majesty. Rude, clownish, and homely expressions, as also quibbling, jingling, and all levity and trifling is very loathsome in Preaching, but in Prayer much more. Affectation of words, curiosity and politeness becomes not the weightiness and awfulness of this duty. Yea abruptness, obscurity, and all incongruity of speaking is to be shunned herein, as much as possible: and that only is to be used which is plain, clear, seemly, weighty, savory and affectionate.

In like manner all indecency of voice, and gesture is to be watched against, as an offensive thing, and apt to expose the Service to the derision of proud scorers. Yet a seasonable elevation of the voice, or other apt expression of earnestness is not to be counted rudeness.

- Sometimes a worthy man may not be aware of some uncomeliness in his tone, or in the posture of his countenance, or some other bodily gesture, by reason of the fervour of his Spirit, in the duty joyned with inadvertency
- towards those exterior and lesser things. And sometimes an ill habit or custom is not easily
- broken off. These inconveniencies are prevented or redressed by a wariness of disposition, and a moderate self-distrust, and the actual observation of what is gracefull or uncomely in others.

Prayer

Prayer is a holy Converse with God, wherein an humble confidence, and Son-like freedom of Spirit with him is acceptable ; yet withall it calls for the greatest prostration of soul, and the deepest reverence and Subjection. Wherefore humbly to expostulate with God, is no fauciness. The whole current of the Prayers of Saints in Scripture doth warrant it, and that not only now and then in extraordinary cases. Indeed our ordinary concerns with God, are no less than the safety of our immortal Souls, the pardoning of our great and numberless offences, the subduing of inveterate corruptions, our escaping of many deadly dangers, our victory over the adverse world, the powerfull presence of his Grace, the light of his Countenance ; as also the interests of his glory, and of his Church and people, and of the world in general, that poor Souls may be delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son ; all which are of the highest moment, and of themselves exceeding difficult (though to God all things are possible) and they all require vehemence and importunity, not as if God needed to be moved or stirred up, but that we may declare our selves duely affected.

Howbeit even the best things may be overdone, and this over-doing is the marring thereof. If in the expostulations of Prayer, men shall utter perverse or frivolous things, or speak
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absurdly, daringly, or irreverently, they are highly culpable and guilty of abusing the most holy things, and of contemning *the most glorious and fearfull name of the Lord their God*. Our freedom of access to God and converse with him, must not be turned into an irreverent and presumptuous familiarity. Those that are guilty of this rashness are worthy of great rebuke. But

- I know well, that the Spirit of Luke-warmness and profaneness, doth usually cast reproaches and scorns upon that zeal and fervency of Spirit, that well becomes the Servants of the Lord, and labours to make the most acceptable, and profitable kind of Prayer to seem ridiculous.

It is against reason to think that the Ministers of the present age, brought up under such eminent advantage for Ministerial abilities, should not be able to speak to God in good and solid sense, in an orderly method, and in affective, grave and seemly language, as becomes the Solemnity of Gods Worship. Experience will justify the sufficiency of serious, pious and painfull Preachers in general, though the captious and curious, and such as love to cavil, have found fault, and despised the profitable endeavours of those, whom God hath owned.

- Besides, the offences that are committed in this matter, proceed more from inadvertency and imprudence than from insufficiency, and may be corrected by care and caution, and good advice.

vice. And it is no vanity to suppose such a competency of prudence easily attainable by all those, that are competently qualified for this Office. Indeed it cannot be expected, but that some will be less able and less perfect than others in this performance, and that the same persons may not be alike perfect therein at all times: nevertheless, there is no such want of Security, that the Churches service will be well performed, if any Prayer be used in the Church besides a prescribed Form. For who can doubt, but that persons of competent ability and prudence, may upon due encouragement be spread throughout a Nation, in such an Age of learning and knowledge? And to say otherwise, were to disparage the Reformed Religion.

And there is no just cause of doubt, but that an able Minister may make use, either of a pre-composed or of an immediately conceived Form of words. Yet in this matter there is great diversity of judgment and affection, even unto much prejudice and opposition. But the same minds might well be conciliated to both ways, if rightly ordered. The Question is here supposed to be of the outward mode, in which two things are mainly to be regarded, to wit, that it be reverend and affective. Such, as are best persuaded of a pre-composed Form, and find it expedient for them, doubtless may rightly manage it to the edifying of themselves

- and others. For which end they must needs in some parts thereof make use of occasional variation and enlargement (though premeditated) as minding the more particular requiries of several times and occasions. But others by a habit of ready utterance and much exercise, are well prepared to pray by the immediate conceptions of their mind in proper and decent words, and can do it without any straining of invention, and with much freedom of Spirit. No more is here spoken, than what impartial
- men will grant. And why should any forbid them that are thus qualified to use their gift? But if any should be rash with their mouths, and hasty to utter any thing before God that is unmeet, they are subject to the discipline of the
- Church to be censured for their error. Moreover heightened affections enlarge the heart, and open the mouth, and do not make a man
- at a stand for want of words. Indeed astonishing affection or an extasie of Spirit may put one to such a stand, but that rarely takes hold of
- any in a pubick performance. But a calm admiration and reverence of God, and seriousness and earnestness of address to him, doth not hinder but further apt expressions.
- For the use of one constant Form, it hath been pleaded that a stranger may thereby the better know how we Worship God, and that the people better understand and remember that,
- to which they are continually used. But on the

the other hand variety and newness of matter, and words are more apt to quicken the affection, and perfect the understanding also, especially of the attentive, whenas under the constant rehearsal of one thing, the faculties grow flat and dull. Besides, in the use of this liberty and variety, the Prayer being ordinarily the same for substance in the main, the vulgar apprehension and memory is help'd, by the sameness of the main substance and scope, and the affections are raised, and the understanding further edified by that which is new in the frame, and method and particular matter, and the peoples more particular variable concerns, are provided for by a more peculiar accommodation and respect thereto, as occasions vary. And by the received doctrine of Faith, a stranger may be sufficiently ascertain'd of the substance of the Worship to be celebrated. For a Doctrine of a Church governs its Worship; and it is well known, that one & the same tenor thereof will pass through the several congregations of a nation, that are not confined to a stinted Form, yet combined in the same faith and order. And when all is said, that management and performance of this Service is the best, that is most effectual to make the Comers thereunto more perfect in knowledge, more devout and zealous towards God, more pious and blameless in their conversation, and every way more perfect in the divine life; and it will be so acknowledged

- by them that are discerning and serious in the things of God. But to conciliate the minds of men diversly affected in this matter, and to prevent the inconveniencies, and to obtain the good of either way, a prescribed Form and a free Prayer will do best together, in reference to the Churches peace and edification.

CHAP. VI.

The right Administration of Ecclesiastical discipline.

THe Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the mysteries of God are Pastors of the Church, and Pastoral authority includes both teaching and ruling, and implies the peoples subjection in the Lord to their Doctrine and discipline. To bereave the Church of discipline, is to leave it unfurnished of that means, which is necessary to the preservation of all orderly Societies of mankind. It is to turn the Garden of the Lord, by plucking up the fence thereof into a Common or Wilderness,

The power intrinsecal to this Office, is not secular and coercive by temporal penalties, but purely Spiritual; which is in the name of Christ, and by authority from him the chief Pastor to watch over the Flock, to encourage them that
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live conformably to the Gospel by the consolations thereof, and to warn them that walk disorderly, and if any continue obstinate therein, to declare them unworthy of Church-Communion and Christian converse, and to require the faithful to have no fellowship with them; to the intent that they may be humbled and reformed.

As the Discipline of all Societies is to be regulated by their true interest and chief scope, so is this of the Church of God. Now the Christian Church looks mainly to the honour of Christ, and the glory of Gods grace in him, and to the Salvation of men, for which ends it was ordained. And consequently its true interest lies in the conservation and augmentation of true Christianity or the power of godliness: but that Church interest which is elsewhere fixed, and levelled to an other mark, appertains to a carnal and worldly State set up in the room, and pretence of this Spiritual Society.

The Churches true and proper excellency lies not in worldly splendor, opulency and power; nor in outward rites and formal unity; nor in the stability and amplitude of a meer external State: but in the inward light and life, in the unfained faith and love, in the purity and Spiritual unity of believers, and in the security and advancement of this internal State, and of the external State in order to the internal. Wherefore the right end of discipline is not to promote temporal glory, and opinions and

formalities thereunto subservient, but the Apostolick faith and worship, and the regeneration of the professors thereof, and their sincere devotion, Godly unity, Sobriety, Righteousness, Brotherly-kindness, and common Charity, and all the vital parts of Christianity: and to keep and cast out Heresie, Superstition, Profaness, Unrighteousness and all wicked error and practice, that tends to frustrate the designs of Christs Gospel: as also to prevent and remedy the causeless tearing and renting of Churches, and those alienations and animosities among Christians, that proceed only from the wills and lusts of men. And the management hereof to this right end, is of far greater consequence, than any scrupulosity or preciseness about its external form and order. Nay, if an external order could be proved to be primitive and Apostolical, and were perverted and abused to enforce corrupt doctrines, scandalous and insnaring inventions and impositions; and in a Ceremonial strictness to indulge real profaness, and discourage true Godliness, it were no other then the mystery of a carnal state under a Spiritual name, having a form of godliness, but denying and suppressing the power thereof.

The right end of Discipline being such as hath been declared, it follows that its proper work is to encourage Godliness, and to disgrace open sin. Accordingly being rightly managed it

it admonisheth the unruly, casts out the obstinate, and restores the penitent. About these things it is active, watchfull and vigorous. What severity it hath, it exerciseth in correcting real scandals and gross breaches of Gods Law, and in maintaining the Churches peace against those that cause divisions, and offences contrary to the Doctrine which we have received, that is the Doctrine of Christ and his Apostles.

But it careth little for those matters, where •• in the life and power of Religion, and the Churches peace and edification is unconcerned. Much less doth it seek to quench godly zeal, •• and to hinder the necessary means of the increase of true godliness, or to afflict peaceable and pious Christians by any needless rigors.

CHAP. VII.

Religious Family-government.

IN the time of the Law the solemn Dedication of houses was in use, the Solemnity expressing that holy exercises should be performed in it, and that the household should be holy. In the first times of Christianity, the Scripture makes mention of Churches that were in particular houses, teaching that Christian families should resemble Churches for piety and godly order.

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By Family-godliness Religion thrives exceedingly, and decays as much by the neglect thereof. By Domestick instruction knowledge is much increased. For this private particular Teaching is apt to be more heeded than that which is publick and general; and persons are hereby prepared to attend with profit upon the publick Preaching. Good principles are infused, and impressions of good are made upon those that live under such government. And where much may not be wrought at present towards conversion, something may stick upon them, which may afterwards appear, when the grace of God shall visit them more powerfully. Moreover National, and Church Reformation should here begin. Nations will be wicked, and Churches corrupt, while families remain disordered: but by the reformation of these lesser Societies the larger are easily reformed, as the whole street is made clean, where every one will sweep his own door, which is but an easie task.

It were most desirable that houses of eminent persons were exemplary in this kind, as it appears King Davids was by that profession, *I will walk within my house with a perfect heart, I will not know a wicked person, he that walketh in a perfect way shall serve me.* But it is lamentable, that in so many families of professed Christians of high and low degree, wickedness carries it with a high hand in drunkenness, swear

swearing, cursing, open profanation of the Lords day, in hatred of Godliness, and contempt of Gods ordinances: and that in many others free from debauchedness and open lewdness, there is no face, Religion, no divine Worship performed, no Godly discipline, no instruction in the way of Godliness observed. Should any professing subjection to God, maintain under his charge and government an open Rebellion against God, or at least a totall neglect of him? Should not God rule, where his Servant rules?

Wherefore it is the proper work of Christian householders in their several houses, to offer Prayers and praises to God dayly, both Morning and Evening *as the dayly Sacrifice*; to Sanctifie the Lords day in Prayer, singing of Psalms, reading the Scriptures and other holy Books, in repeating Sermons, instructing Children and Servants, and in taking account of their diligence and proficiency under the means of Grace; and this to be done not formally and customarily, but conscienciously in good earnest and to good effect.

It is their charge also to hold a prudent hand over children in their Minority, and not to indulge them in a course of idleness, sensual pleasure, or any inordinate liberty; also to make intercession to God for those under their tuition, to allow Servants time for secret duty; lastly to purge their Families of sinfull disorders, and to remove

move scandals, as carefully as the *Israelites* cleansed their houses from Leaven, at the time of the Passover.

As the Religious care of Superiors, so the submission and teachableness of inferiors is enjoined. Children, Servants and Sojourners in Godly families, being come into the Lords heritage and portion, and under his special protection, and the dispensation of his grace, should not think it a yoke of bondage to live under such a Discipline, and to be held unto such exercises; but should improve the advantage and be followers of whatsoever is good and praiseworthy. And whatsoever imperfections they find therein, they should not malignantly aggravate the same, but bless God for the good, and consider the defects as the remainders of human weakness.

CHAP. VIII.

Private mutual Exhortations, Pious discourse and edifying Conversation.

IT is also of great advantage when Christian people are inured in the way of Religious converse, and discourse for edification. For by this means they propagate the knowledge and love of the truth, and keep themselves in Spiritual life and vigor, and daily building up
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one another on their most holy faith, advance heaven-ward. And it is as comely as advantageous. The royal Prophet understood what was seemly and worthy of him in his conversation, and he saith, *I will talk of thy commandments before Princes and not be ashamed.* Is it not seemly for those that are risen with Christ to speak of the things above, and for Fellow-travellers towards the heavenly Kingdom, to mention the affairs of their own country? It is also sweet and lovely, a partaking of that *grace that was poured into Christs lips*, and it is pleasant to all such as savour the things of God. Yea, are not Converts bound by all means to seek the conversion of others? We have received this holy commandment, *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good for the use of edifying, that it may administer grace to the hearers.*

Indeed holy language proceeding from the mouths of Scandalous persons or detected hypocrites is disgraced, and loseth its savour. If affectation and vanity appear therein, it hath not so sweet a relish. But this can be no disparagement to gracious words, which holy and humble men of inoffensive lives speak feelingly from the abundance of the heart; and those that judge them hypocrites, God will judge. Moreover, honest minds may be sometimes guilty of imprudence, and thereby occasion some disgust, and make that which is good and wholsom

wholsom to be unacceptable and ineffectual. Nevertheless tis a bad matter for any one from the baseness of some Hypocrites, and the weakness of good Christians to take occasion of pouring out contempt upon this godly Practice. Yea, whosoever gives a check to it, upon pretence of its unseasonableness and impertinency at some times, are not well advised for the interest of true Religion, because for one that is overforward herein a hundred are too backward, and that among the Wise and Able, who might reap a harvest of much good, if they were not too shie or sluggish. The most have need rather of the spur than the bridle in this case.

Wherefore discretion will mind the season in which every thing is beautifull, and not inconsiderately force Discourse, and run on therein when it will not be entertained, as in the set times of other Mens sports or business: Nor will it press any beyond due measure, and what they can well receive, lest that which in it self is precious become nauseous or untastfull. Opportunity and leasure will sufficiently offer it self for set and solemn conference; and besides this, there will be room almost continually to put in by the by, a word that may take effect.

••• *How forcible are right words!* It hath sometimes come to pass, that a short Saying occasionally let fall upon a prepared mind, hath entered deep, and stuck close. Yea, that which

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takes not much at present, may be remembred, and have its effect after a long time, and then be matter of much Blessing and Praise. The counsel of the wise Preacher looks this way. *In the morning sow thy seed, in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper this or that, or whether they shall be alike good.* Whatsoever scornfull or careless Men conceit hereof, the Divine Wisdom hath made it praise-worthy and precious. *The tongue of the just is as choice silver, and the lips of the righteous feed many.* And to good Hearts this Practice will not be burdensom, for they will recreate their Minds herewith, as an holy divertisement and serious Pastime, while others spend their leasure in that mirth and laughter which the Wise Man calls madness.

CHAP. IX.

The Prevalence of Religion or real Godliness in the Civil Government of a Nation.

IN Christian States and Kingdoms Religion being Gods interest, ought to have the preeminence in all things. And its Preeminence is no incroachment upon the Rights of the Higher Powers, but their Establishment. God alone

alone hath an underived and unlimited Empire over Man his creature. The People are primarily Gods Subjects, and then are subject to Princes, as to his Vicegerents, and obedience to him is the grand interest both of Prince and People. None can doubt that God hath made his own Glory, and mans Salvation the supreme ends of government and subjection: And consequently, that is the best Policy which gives these ends the highest place, and makes temporal advantages and the welfare of the outward Man subordinate thereunto. And this requires that the Constitution give the highest regards to Gods Laws, and maintain their Authority, and that the whole publick Administration tend to the promoting of Righteousness and true Holiness, and to the suppressing of all unrighteous and impious Practice.

As it is the Church's duty and honour to teach and command her Children to do whatsoever Christ hath commanded: so it is the proper work and chiefest glory of the Magistrate, who is Gods Minister to defend the Faith, and uphold the Ordinances of the Gospel, and to further the most lively and powerfull Dispensation of them, and to incourage and command obedience to the Divine Law written in Nature or Scripture. In subserviency hereunto his Power is to determine such things as are requisit in general, but in particular are left undetermined of God, and therefore called

led indifferent, and are to be ordered by human Prudence according to the general Rules of Gods word. And for these ends the chief Magistrate hath a Supremacy in all causes, and over all persons, Civil and Ecclesiastical. But it is no diminution of his Authority to remove from it things unnecessary, unprofitable, and offensive in their use, and for their doubtful nature apt to perplex the Subjects conscience.

And he is the general Bishop of his Dominions in a political sense, without any incroachment upon that Authority, wherewith Christ the King of the Church hath invested spiritual Pastors. As he is such an Officer, it is worthy of his chiefest care to provide, and send forth able and faithful Dispensers of the Word, that may teach the People the good knowledge of God, after the example of the good King *Jehoshaphat*; and to see that every one, who hath the Cure of Souls, be resident with his Flock, and constantly instruct them by preaching the Word, and Catechizing them in the Principles of Religion; and not to suffer Pluralists to seize upon several Congregations as a prey, to fleece but not to feed them; to encourage laborious Ministers, that watch for the Peoples Souls, as those that must give an account; and strictly to injoyn the Sanctification of the Lords Day, which was sanctified to the publick Worship of God by the Apostles of our Lord, who were

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guided by an infallible Spirit in settling this, as all other Ordinances pertaining to Christs Kingdom, and was observed by the Apostolick Churches, and so hath continued in all Ages, and in all places of Christianity, and is conveyed down to us by as unquestionable Tradition as the Scripture it self.

It is not of little moment to suppress, or at least to bring into disgrace whatsoever customs serve for nought, but to feed inordinate Sensuality, and to make those that use them profane, vicious and licentious. There are frequented shews and pastimes well known, that increase unto all ungodliness, and may be called the *Devils ordinances*. Those that wish well to Piety have an ill part to act, when they take upon them to defend some exercises, from which an extreem abuse is inseperable, and which are made a trade of gain arising from the impurity and profaness of them, and therefore are incorrigible, and can admit no reformation.

•• The Piety of any Nation is not to be measured by formalities and opinions and uniformity in little things, but by substantial Devotion, by solid zeal in the weighty matters of the Law, and main concerns of Religion, by righteousness of life, by sobriety, purity, modesty, by peace and concord with mutual forbearance in those differences that should not, and need not make breaches among Brethren, by dutifulness in all relations, by industry, frugality,

gality, and by abounding Charity that is full of good Works.

Happy is that State where religious influence is predominant, where the pious and prudent bear sway, not by intrusion, but by lawfull Admission; also where it ariseth to that strength, as to carry along with it the affection and interest of a Nation, not by setting up the Faction of a few, but by making the generality, or at least the greater number of considerable men, some of them truly regenerate Christians, and the rest orderly and well affected. One would think it were out of question, that it were more desirable, that Religiousness should be in fashion, than open dissoluteness and profaness. For uncontrolled profaness will run down all Religion. But when those that reach not the Power of Godliness indeed, come so far, as to take up an outward garb thereof, it is a great external advantage to true Religion, and shews its prevalent Influence on the publick State. If any should demur upon this Assertion, by making it a question whether Phariseism or Profaness be the worser evil, let him know first, that profane and dissolute Christians are notorious Hypocrites, for professing to know God, when in works they deny him. Besides Phariseism is not simple insincerity, but a compound hypocrisie, wherein malignity and enmity against the Power of Godliness is the chief ingredient, it is a kind of

strict externalness that seeks to destroy the inward life and spirit of that Religion, which it pretends to own. I have no list to say that such malignity is less mischievous than filthy lewdness or debauchery. But the garb of strict Profession here mentioned, is of another nature, and serviceable to the Churches good, though we must continually and strictly charge all Men to beware of resting in it to the ruine of their own Souls.

CHAP. X.

Christian Unity and Concord.

ALL faithfull Christians are Members of one mystical Body, having all one Spirit, one Lord and Head, one Faith, one Baptism, and one God and Father of them all, one Hope of their Calling, and one Heaven to receive them all. Their Union and Fellowship being chiefly mystical and invisible, their Unity is far greater, than what outwardly appears to the World, and sometimes than what themselves can discern among themselves in particular, by reason of many inferior, yet very disquieting differences and discords.

Nevertheless it behoves them to provide, that it might appear as much as may be, what it is indeed, and that it be conspicuous and illustrious

strious in the sight of Men, by their walking in love and peace. Unity is the Churches strength and beauty, the honour of the Faithfull, and an argument for the certainty of their most holy Faith. It makes Religion lovely, and draws forth blessing & praise from the Beholders of it, and wins the World to a love and reverence of that Piety, which makes the Professors of it to live in brotherly kindness and mutual charity. But Division is the Church's weakness and deformity, the reproach of Christians, and a scandal against Christianity, and an objection put into the mouths of Infidels against the Faith, and an occasion of stumbling unto many.

In the present divided state of Religion, each Party is apt to appropriate Godliness to themselves, or at least to carry it towards others, as if they did so. And they, that are loudest in accusing Dissenters of uncharitableness in this kind, are themselves as uncharitable as any others. It is true, that God hath a peculiar People, distinguished from all others by a peculiar Character, but it is not confined to any Party of this or that Persuasion or Denomination, that is narrower than meer Christianity. And all true Christians are to receive one another, as God hath received them. Indeed the best Christians are to be best esteemed, and their fellowship is most desired. But if they should be severed from the universality

and in a strict combination set up as divided Party, it tends to the Churches Ruine: *For a Kingdom divided against it self cannot stand,* and if the nobler parts of the Body forsake the rest, the whole must needs die.

Christian Concord doth not signifie an aggregation of things inconsistent, as *the fellowship of righteousness with unrighteousness, the communion of light with darkness, the concord of Christ with Belial.* To set up Unity against Piety, is a conspiracy against Christ, who is *King of righteousness*, and to pretend Piety against Unity, is to oppose Christ the *Prince of Peace*, whose Kingdom is the Reign of Love in the Soul: Holiness and Peace must kiss each other, and as inseperable Companions walk together.

•• It is the unity of the Spirit we are charged to keep in the bond of Peace: But concord in any external Order without fellowship in the Divine Life, is not *the unity of the Spirit*, which is to partake of the same new nature, and to walk together in the same holy way. This is far more excellent than the greatest compliance in matters of meer external order, and consequently much more regardable in our estimation and reception of Persons.

• Though to meet in one place, be not of so great importance as to be joynd in one Spirit, yet it must not be counted a small matter. The unity of Faith and Love is much concern'd in the

the unity of Church Communion : it will be a matter of some difficulty for them to live together in Love, whom one Church cannot hold. Church divisions commonly divide affections, and draw men into Parties and divided Interests, and make them seek to strengthen their own Party, by weakening all others, to the great damage of true Religion in general. For which cause the unchurching of Churches and renouncing of Communion with them that are found in the Doctrine of Faith and Sacrament, and in the substance of Divine Worship, should be dreaded by all sober Christians, yea, all unnecessary distances should be avoided, least they lead to greater alienations, and direct enmities and oppositions.

Those Churches that cannot hold local communion one with another, by reason of differences that destroy not the essentials of Christianity, should yet maintain a dear and tender Christian love one to another, and profess their owning of each other as Churches of Jesus Christ, and should agree together upon certain just and equal Rules, for the management of their unavoidable differences, so as may least prejudice charity and common good, and least harden the ungodly and grieve the weak or dishonour God, or hinder the success of common, great and necessary truths upon the Souls of men, amicably promoting the common cause of

Christianity, and every part thereof, in which they are agreed, and opening their disagreements to the People as little as they can.

Schism is an unwarrantable separation from or division in a Church, and without controversy it is a heinous sin, and to be detested both for its exceeding sinfulness, and wofull consequents. But it hath been so disguised, and the odious name hath been so confusedly cast abroad, and so unreasonably and maliciously misapplied, that it is too slightly thought of, where it should be sadly laid to heart : For it

- is common with the strongest Party, be it right or wrong, to call themselves *the Church*, and to have no better name for others than Schismatics ; And so the reproach is but contemned by them that suffer it, and the sin it self is too little feared on all sides.

- But it is not a Temporal Law nor Secular Power, nor any prevalence of Strength or Interest, that makes a Church ; and none of these things will excuse them from Schism, that act uncharitably against their Brethren, and obstruct the progress of the Gospel, and the increase of Godliness ; Nor are they forthwith to be counted Schismatics, who cannot in all points observe the Commandments of men, and cannot neglect to yield their help to the saving of Souls, that would otherwise want due means of Salvation, when God hath called them to that Service, with a *woe unto them if they Preach not the Gospel.*

For

For as much as all must dread the guilt of Schism truly so called, let it be well considered, that Ecclesiastical Superiors are as much concerned to take heed of Schismatical impositions, as the People are to shun Schismatical Recusancy and Disobedience: As well the Pastors Wisdom as the Peoples due submission, is here importunately called for. When Superiors know how to Command, and Inferiors how to Obey, things will go as well as may be hoped for in this our imperfect state here upon Earth. De

As the Peace of a corrupt state of Religion is best assured by suppressing all conscientious inquiries into its Decrees; so the Peace of the true Church and of the sound state of Religion, is most secured by the most perfect exercise of sound Judgment and upright Conscience in all its adherents. That Church that claims to herself an infallibility, or challenges and obtains from her partakers an implicit Faith in her determinations, without further enquiry, needs not fear the breaking of the bond of her Peace, if she multiply constitutions and impose any devised Doctrines and Ordinances suitable to her own estate. On the other hand it is most evident that a Rational Conscientious and truly Pious Concord among such Christians, as know and care what they believe, can never be procured without avoiding the imposition of things unwritten and unnecessary,

79 •• necessary, in which it is morally impossible for men of sound faith and good conscience generally to agree. But when necessary things only are enjoined, their weight and truth will soon be known, and owned of all honest minds, or at least are most likely so to be; and much sooner and easier than the weight, and truth of little and doubtfull things; and by this means they would more easily move with joynt consent in one Godly order, the matters of their difference being before hand taken out of the way.

This moderate course being held, the union of unfeigned faith and love will become a sure foundation of true Christian concord with sound judgment and good conscience, and do that for the suppressing of Schism in the right state of Christianity, which implicit faith and blind obedience doth in a false, corrupt and *Antichristian* State.

- Here it is mainly requisite, that those things that most promote or hinder the New birth and Spiritual life, be by Pastors and people universally most regarded; and those that make little for or against the same, be looked upon as of little moment. And the truth is, when the greatest and weightiest matters are duely prized and most contended for, contentions about little things will soon expire. And if this course be taken, hypocrites will lose their advantages of seeming Religious by zeal for those things, wherein Religion doth not consist, and
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for and carnal designs and interests that now rend
ne the Churches, and trouble all things, would
ly be defeated and abandoned.

Moreover to maintain peace, they that Rule
on had need consider what mistakes and weak-
or nesses are competible to true Believers, and
ner sometimes to the best and choicest of them,
tle that they might not bear ~~too~~ too hard upon
ey them. And they that are ruled must consider
in that the best polity or Constitution, so far as it is
ace of mans regulating, hath defects and inconve-
on niences, and affairs will be complicated; and
ure therefore they must not be too unyielding, but
ith bear with what is tolerable and not easily reme-
do diable (though they may not in any wise do a
ght sinfull act, or omit a duty in the season of it.)
nd For by want of such forbearance, they may
nd sooner destroy the good part than mend what is
amiss. It is not seldom in such cases that men
seek remedies, that prove worse than the disease.

If the healing of breaches require an yield-
ing or receding from what hath been stood up-
on, it should be on that part where equity and
necessity declares it should be. It is not so easie
for every Christian to resolve what is right in
many opinions and usages, as for those in power
to omit the inforcing of them. Unnecessary
injunctions may easier be parted with, than
mens judgments can be altered, or their doubt-
ing consciences well settled. This tenderness
and forbearance is no lessening of the Church's
honour

- honour and power. And a little diversity in little things, cannot rationally move derision in the irreligious, nor justly give scandal to any. But there be things of that slightness that an over-precise and importunate uniformity in them, may occasion contempt and suspicion of hypocrisie or superstitious folly
- Unity of faith and life is the glory of the true Church, and uniformity in external order is to be indeavored with Sobriety, and is best effected by cutting off superfluous institutions and laying no greater burden on the faithfull than things necessary. And this pacifick state may be as well hoped as wished for, if the Guides of the Church would *seek the things of Christ more than their own things.*

But alas, the usurpations and impositions of proud and selfish men, even in pretence of suppressing Schism, have hindred Christian people from uniting in the true center of unity which is Jesus Christ, as set forth in the doctrine of the Apostles and Prophets, and *which is the same yesterday and to day and for ever.* In deed, they that prevail by power to advance their own devised ways, and crush Dissenters *may make a desolation and then call it peace and union;* but it is not the peace of Christs Kingdom.

Divisions are caused by men of corrupt minds, and partly by the weakness of Good men ascribing too much to their own apprehensions and inclinations, and not considering the

condition of others as their own, nor minding
the necessity and usefulness of lawfull compli-
ance, or of mutual forbearance and discention.

CHAP. XI.

A good frame of Ecclesiastical Polity.

THe promoting of true Christianity, and
all the things before named pertaining to
the sound state of Religion, depends much upon
a good frame of Ecclesiastical polity. Un-
doubtedly our Lord Jesus Christ hath appointed
Spiritual Officers to guide and rule his Church;
and in the government thereof there be some
things of divine right, and unalterable by the will
of man; and there be many things necessary to
the support and due managment thereof, that
are of humane determination as to the particu-
lars. Both kinds are liable to depravation and
great abuse. Things of divine right may be ..
corruptly managed and perverted to wrong
ends; And things of mans appointment are
sometimes not only ill managed, but ill or-
dained, as being wholly incongruous and per-
haps pernicious to the right ends of goverment.
Now a good polity is the whole compages of ..
things laid together in the fabrick of the Church
fitted and directed to promote the Christian life,
or the power of Godliness, and to prevent or
remedy the decay thereof. And the more no-
tably

tably and powerfully conducive it is to this end; it is by so much the more excellent.

- x. According to this rule, it hath most regard for sincere Christians, and insists most upon their encouragement and the increase of their number, and it makes all its external orders and interests subservient to the prosperity of the Church regenerate.

The order wherein it excels, is an orderly management of those things, which are of divine Command, in matter of Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Conversation, in such manner as is most effectual for the obtaining of their ends, by such necessary rules of Prudence, as are requisite in all Human actions.

- It prefers purity and spirituality before external pomp, though it neglects not those necessary decencies and Ornaments that should attend the Service of God, according to the awfull regard that is to be had thereto, and the reverend demeanor to be used therein.

It provides able Ministers of the Gospel, and that every Pastor be resident with his own Flock, and that he duly feed them, and labour in the Word and Doctrine, and that the People be not left in the hands of a Mercenary procured at the cheapest rate.

- It provides by a liberal maintenance worthy endowments and priviledges, for that meet support and honour of the ministry, which is requisit to preserve the authority and reverend esteem

esteem of their Persons and Office ; yet it regulates the same as much as may be, to prevent ambition, avarice, sensuality, idleness, haughtiness ; that the worst of Men may not be encouraged to aspire to its Promotions, and that good Men may not degenerate, and that the sacred name of *the Church* may be held by a society of Men, not carnal but truly spiritual.

It is constituted as much as may be, to secure a succession of wise and godly Pastors and Teachers from age to age, which is the surest means of the Church's perpetual good Estate.

It is not framed to uphold things only serviceable to a carnal interest, but to enforce things acceptable to God and profitable to Men ; and to suppress whatsoever tends to defeat the power of the Gospel, or disgrace the Profession of it ; and to reform abuses impartially and effectually.

According to the true end of Ecclesiasticall Authority (which is for edification, and not for destruction) it enlargeth the power of doing good, and restrains the power of hurting, as much as the ends of Government will permit such restraint ; accordingly its greatest severity takes hold of the worst Men, and the best are left most at liberty, and secure from unnecessary molestation.

It is directed to the satisfying of the just and reasonable demands of conscience, which

is a choice and tender thing, and therefore it is very tender of intangling and perplexing the same unnecessarily.

It makes the Pastors government truly pastoral, that is, not imperious and violent, but Paternal, proceeding by Exhortation and Doctrine, and gentle instruction and love, and when correction is necessary, by the rod of Discipline.

It aims at the forming of Mens minds, and the governing of their conversations by good and sound Principles, and to make them, as much as may be, a Law to themselves : yet as supposing the exceeding pravity of Mans nature, and the infirmities of the best of men, it leaves not the safety of Religion meerly to Mens good dispositions and inclinations, but by due restraints curbeth the remainder of Mans perverseness.

It seeks not to debase the People and depress their faculties, that they may be the more easily led captive by politick Men at their pleasure; but to ennoble them, as much as they are capable, and to advance their understandings to the best improvement ; and accordingly it takes care, that they may be thoroughly instructed in things pertaining to Faith and Godliness. In a word, it would make even the lowest and meanest of them not Brutes but Men; and not meer natural men, but Christians or spiritual Men.

The subject here described hath different degrees of excellency, as it is more or less answerable to its rule, and available to its end. But notwithstanding divers defects and errors, if that which is wholsom and good be predominant, it is to be esteemed a good Constitution: yet the best is most desirable. Of such consequence is the structure of Ecclesiastical Polity, that if it be naught, it hath a continual evil influence on all Church affairs, and perverts the whole course thereof; and the making of many particular good Laws, or Rules will not help it; for in that case they are rendered almost useless. It is notably observed by a Person of eminent worth. *Church Government is a fort or castle, if Traitors to the Kingdom of Christ get the possession of it, it were desirable, that the Castle were ruin'd, and the Christian Religion left to support it self by the innate evidence of its own Truth, than be forcibly maintain'd for contrary ends, and prove a mystery of Ungodliness and Tyranny.*

CHAP. XII.

The corrupt state of Religion; and first Externalness and Formality.

EVERY kind of excellency in the present World hath its counterfit or false resemblance,

- blance, which in things of a moral nature is the depravation or degeneration thereof. And so the true Religion hath its degeneration which is destructive to it; yet in this corruption of Mankind is easily mistaken, and exalted in the room of it. It is a dead image of Christianity without the inward life of Christ, and the works thereof are dead works being not wrought in God. It is the dominion of the spirit of the World, and of unmortified lust under pretence of the rule of the Spirit of God.
- It is a zeal of some unnecessary Opinions and unprofitable Observances, received sometimes from a more peculiar and private fancy, sometimes from the general custom and tradition; or at the best, a zeal of Orthodoxy, when that form of sound Doctrine is not obeyed from the heart.
 - It is a self-chosen godliness, and not of Gods making, taken up to delude the Conscience, and lift up the Soul with high but ill-grounded hopes, and in the mean while to excuse it from that which is *the root of the matter*, the renouncing of the carnal life and all worldly lusts, and the obtaining of *the spirit of Power, Love, and of a sound mind*. and a life of Purity, Goodness, and impartial Righteousness.
 - The best of it is but a gloss or varnish of superficial Religiousness, accompanied with a dead kind of Morality, which hath its rise from education, or from complexion (otherwise called good Nature) but springs not from the

the root of love towards God, and of a living faith in Jesus Christ.

The several impostures, disguises and false pretences, by which Men delude themselves, and abuse the World in this matter, are almost numberless: yet they generally fall into one of these two main currents of religious Aberrations, either the Political, popular and broad way of Externalness and Customariness, or the devious path of Sectarian dissimulation and extravagancy.

The more ample degeneration of Christianity is the meerly formal, external and political State thereof, that hath prevailed far and near over the Christian World. This externalness is very plausible and specious, but very consistent, and for the most part accompanied with a large indulgence to the Flesh, and with much licentiousness of Principles and Practice; and it casts the mind into a deep forgetfulness of that which is spiritual, and substantial in Religion. It is the common roade and broad way, because most obvious and easie to the carnal spirit of all sorts of Men, who having some conscience of Religion, gladly take up with a form, that with more security and peace they may deny the power thereof; as also because it seems most servicable to Superiors for shaping and swaying the consciences of Inferiors to their wills, and to the ends by them designed. Accordingly as it gets ground,

it erects a frame of things which hath a shew of Piety, Unity and Order, but is really an engine devised to destroy whatsoever may be truly called by those lovely names.

- When Mens false and vain inventions rule instead of Gods Oracles ; when the truth of the Gospel is mingled with such Doctrines, Institutions, and Observances, as corrupt the Purity, enervate the Power, and frustrate the ends of the Gospel ; when the misapprehension or misapplication of true Doctrine depraves the mind, and begets a false notion of Godliness or Christianity ; when Regeneration or true Conversion is prevented, by being made in effect no more than Civility, joyned with a dead conformity to the exterior part of the Christian Institution ; when Religion is placed in an outside Pharisaical Holiness, in some bodily severity, and it may be in meer forms and empty shews, without internal and real Mortification and Devotion ; when the exterior Ordinances of the Gospel are retained, but used after another manner, than what becomes the Gospel-Church, or suits the ends of Gospel-Worship ; when a sapless and fruitless Generation of Men are nourished in holy Orders, who cherish the People in ignorance, profaneness or lukewarmness, who shew them a way to Heaven, that is smooth, broad and easie to the Flesh, who serve, or at least spare the lusts of Men, who humour the vulgar Sort in rude follies,

follies, who give absolution upon formal and loose terms, and therewith a false repose to poor deluded Souls; when the great interest of Churchmen is to promote Superstition, blind Devotion, and implicit Faith, and to hold People in the chains of spiritual darkness, and in the pleasing bondage of carnal liberty, their Consciences being in the mean time secured by the belief of certain Tenents and Articles of Religion, and the devout Observance of certain external Ordinances; When the Policy of the Church is contrived to maintain fleshly ease and pleasure, worldly pomp and power, and the chiefest glory of the Ecclesiastical State lies in outward order, without inward life and spirit in sacred Administration; When the weapons of its warfare are not spiritual but carnal, suitable to an earthly and sensual State; When submission to the wills of Masters upon Earth is called obedience, and their peaceable possession of Wealth and Honor is taken for the Churches Peace; When concord in the unprofitable or hurtfull dictates of Men is made to pass for the unity of the Spirit; When the Constitution it self (the general corruption of Mankind being considered) is found defective for the true end of Government, and lets loose the reins of depraved Appetite, and by carnal Allurements alienates the mind from the things of the Spirit of God, and turns it after the pomps and vanities of the World, and serves

the voluptuousness, covetousness and pride of its adherents, for which cause its yoke is easie to the sensual part of men, but it is scandalous to them that know the truth, and becomes a Stepmother to the most serious and conscientious; when these and the like things prevail, the Christian Religion is turned into another thing than what it is indeed, by men of corrupt minds, who serve their own lusts, and by the wisdom that descends not from above, but is Earthly, Sensual, Devilish, square out to themselves, and those that live under their influence, a loose Form of Christianity not after Christ, but after the course of this world.

But this corruption is more or less enormous in different Ages and Countries, according to its greater or nearer distance from the times and means of purer knowledge.

- And a less corrupt state may be severed from that which is more grossly vicious and impure, and yet remain a degeneration in the same kind though in a lower degree.

And let this be noted that in a degenerate state, the doctrines and institutions of Christ may be so far retained, as to contain things absolutely necessary to Christian faith and life, which may beget and preserve the vitals of Christianity in them, that do not mingle with the other poisonous ingredients, or at least not in their full extent.

- Yea, the Degeneration may happen to be
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in a lower degree, and less pernicious, and perhaps only as a Scab upon some part, and not overspreading the whole Body of the Church, and great multitudes therein may profess and practice the truth as it is in Jesus. Thus the *Judaical* Church in its corrupt state retained the vitals of true Religion, which were a sufficient means of grace to them that escaped the pollutions of those times, and were not seasoned with the leaven of false Teachers.

CHAP. XIII.

The Sectarian and Fanatical Degeneration.

THE other deviation lies more out of the common rode of the generality of carnal Gospellers, and this is usually stiled *Sectarian*, whereof the particular by paths are numberless. But let this be noted, that whatsoever way swerves from the main ends of Religion, and the great design of the Gospel, is no other than a Sect or Faction, yea, though it spread so far and wide, as that they who walk therein, do for their huge multitudes presume to appropriate to themselves alone, the Title of the *Catholick Church*. Wherever the interest of a Party bears sway to the detriment of the universal Church,

19: and the common cause of Godliness, where inventions false or useles are made the necessary Symbols of Religion, there a *Sectarian* interest bears Sway, and the gaining of the Secular power will not wipe off the blot of such a Party.

•• The name of Sectaries may fit proud usurpers as well as blind zealots. This necessary *proviso* being made, it remains to speak in this place of the more incoherent, unstable, and ungovernable sort of Sects. The root of the evil in this kind is commonly a heightened fancy, and complexional Zeal bearing Rule instead of Sober judgment, and a more intellectual, Spiritual and pure love. It shall suffice to set down some notable instances, for it were endless to recount them all.

•• Some have been so far transported with the hatred of Church Tyranny, and persecuting Pride and cruelty, that they mind not the good of Church unity, order and government; and they run so far from implicit faith in the dictates of proud men, that themselves have proudly slighted the Churches directive judgment, and all Pastoral Authority as a thing of no value, and have fiercely impugned it, as opposite to Christian liberty.

Of the like strain are they, that upon pretence of higher attainments and greater Spirituality have rejected external ordinances; as the dispensation of the Word and Sacraments, and the publick Ministry, and Ecclesiastical
disci-

discipline as low and beggarly rudiments, while they declare themselves hereby to be carnal, and vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds.

Some through abuse and mistake of Divine promises concerning the Spirits Teaching, have forsaken the sure guidance of Gods Law, and betaken themselves to the uncertain intimations of Providence, and the dangerous impulses of their own Spirits, and pretended immediate inspirations, which are for the most part the delusions of an exalted Fancy; and sometimes they have really fallen under Satanical impressions.

Because there is the fleshly wisdom of the carnal mind, that is enmity against God; some have disclaimed reason it self as corrupt and carnal, and in the mean while follow their own wilfull imagination under the pretence of the Light within them, and delight in things irrational and unintelligible, and render themselves incapable of sound instruction.

A Fanatick fury hath hurried some under pretence of erecting *the first Monarchy*, to rend and tear Kingdoms and Nations, to attempt the dissolving of all Government in Church and State; which is indeed the most ready way to subvert Gods Kingdom by the subversion of Christian Magistracy and Ministry, and to dispossess the Gospel of the Territories it hath gained.

Some have proceeded so far in the pretended
Reign

Reign of the Spirit, as to abrogate the external Frame of the Christian Religion, and to turn the Gospel History into mystical Allegories, yet such as might be conceived and shaped in a vulgar fancy, and are low and despicable things in comparison of the great mystery of Godliness, according to the Historical sense of Scripture.

And which is yet worse, some have been so gross as to turn into an Allegory the great hope of our Christian calling, even the Resurrection of the dead, and the life of the World to come, and so pervert the mysteries of the Gospel into a mysterious Infidelity and Apostacy from Jesus Christ.

- • Yea, some perverting the high expressions of fellowship with God, and dwelling in God, and being made partakers of the Divine nature and the like, have impiously talked of their begodded condition, and blasphemously intitled the most High and Holy One, to their abominable extravagancies and impurities. And besides all these, some are perpetual Seekers, having no fixed belief in the most important points.
- • Persons so far enlightened as ~~are~~ to see the necessity of a higher way than the common dead formality, and having some taste of Spiritual things, and thereby raised above the general indifferency, and Luke-warmness unto a kind of strictness, seriousness, and fervour of Spirit
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in Religion, yet falling short of true Conversion, and especially if they be well conceited of their own gifts and parts and seeming graces, are apt to be carried away with a full gale of fancy into the gulf of these delusions.

And a tincture of this contagion, though in a lower degree, may sease on some, who stand in the true grace of God, being deceived by a shew of purity and Spirituality, and peradventure lying under the disadvantage of some insinuating occasions, which work upon the remainder of pride, levity, curiosity, and other corruptions, which the present imperfect State leaves in the hearts of real Christians. And some of these may sooner fall into absurd opinions, than many that receive not the truth in love, who may easily abide among the Orthodox, either because they do not concern themselves in Religious inquiries, or because they are held by worldly advantages which stand on truths side.

The fancy is sooner filled with notions and the affections thereby raised, than the judgment is well informed and the heart established in grace. Hence proceed a sickliness in the Souls appetite, a satiety of plain Saving truths, and of sound wholsom Preaching, a desire of novelty, Self-conceitedness, pragmatistical confidence, rash censures, partiality in hearing the Word, a lessening of the Pastoral Authority, ineroachments upon the Pastors Office, dividing

dividing principles and practices, and innumerable inconveniences. Moreover, well meaning People associated in a stricter profession, are apt to be sequacious of some leading persons among them, and some will follow the rest for company. And the high pretensions and heightened confidence of Enthusiasts, is a kind of Enchantment to bewitch those that unwarrantably approach to near them, especially such as are predisposed by temper or complexion towards Enthusiasm.

In these things men forsake *the Law and the Testimony* to walk by false Lights, and to follow blind Guides. The Holy Ghost bids us trie the Spirits, and hath given us an infallible rule of Tryal, and leaves us not to any unaccountable impulse or impression. The whole Tenor of Evangelical Doctrine shews that the Christian Spirit is both pure and peaceable, that it doth not divide, break and scatter a Christian people, but unites, heals and settles them, that it doth not overturn Churches and civil States, nor inflame Rulers against subjects, nor subjects against Rulers, nor dissolve Magistracy and Ministry; *but that it turns the hearts of the Fathers to the Children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the Just*; and conciliates the minds of Magistrates, and Ministers and People of all degrees in righteousness and peace, which is the right and sure way of erecting Gods Kingdom. It doth not cancel reason,
but

but maintain its interest in Religion, as being under the power of God, and the great prop and proof of the Christian Faith. It is a Spirit of judgment, and soberness, and suppresseth the wild Dominion of the unruly imagination. It doth not turn men from humanity and civil behaviour, unto a surly and cynical pride, and Fanatick melancholy and austerity; but it disposeth them to all the duties of human life, and civil Converse.

But *there must be Heresies, and it is impossible but that offences should come.* Where the light of the Gospel is broken forth, Sectarianism and Fanaticism is the Devils After-Game. So it sprung up in *Germany* upon the birth of Protestantism, so it sprung up in the Primitive Church upon the birth of Christianity, in the Gnosticks, and such like Sectaries, and so it continues in our times. These irregularities and extravagancies are a great damage, and reproach to a serious, zealous and strict profession, and it is a stone of stumbling before many.

Nevertheless the greatest and most dangerous Degeneration from the Sound state of Religion lies not this way. The conceptions and motions of Fanaticism, having a kind of Spiritual strain though in a delusion, take not with the greater number whether of high or low degree, the learned or unlearned sort. And in case it ceases on a greater multitude, it may trouble and unsettle

settle a State, but it can never settle it self; and if it domineer a while, its Tyranny cannot hold, because it hath no foundation, and it can never obtain to be a national Religion, because it is inconsistent with the stability of civil Government. Its greatest mischief to a State is, that it may serve the designs of others to work out a more lasting misery. For which cause, the *Romish* Emissaries under a vizard have overacted this wild Spirit, that by its confusion and Anarchy, they might make way to introduce their own Tyranny. But the more extensive, dangerous, and lasting depravation of Christianity lies on the same side with Popery, which is formidable indeed being founded in power and policy and suted to worldly interests, and to which mens innate propensions do generally more incline them. For that their fancies and affections are inveigled with its outward wealth and glory, and their consciences laid a sleep by its loose principles and lifeless forms of devotion.

CH A P. XIV.

The way of preserving Religion uncorrupt.

THe truth and purity of Religion lies in its conformity to its rule, which is Gods revealed will or law, and its deviation from it, is
its

its depravation. From this rule men are easily drawn aside, being inticed by their own vain imaginations, perverse inclinations, and carnall interests, to false ways and vain inventions. For which cause it behooves the zealous *Religionist* to be carefull even to jealousy, that he be not imposed upon by himself or others, and in this care heartily and intirely to resign, and conform himself to the Law of God. By such resignation and conformity he secures his own Soul, and what in him lies the Sound state of Religion.

It is here acknowledged, that what is written in nature is Gods Law, as well as what is written in Scripture, and that natural Revelation as well as supernatural is Divine, and whatsoever is known of God by the Light of nature in the matter of Religious Worship, is to be received as well as that, which is known by the Light of Scripture; and the divine Goodness is to be owned in both, though in the latter it hath appeared more abundantly, because therein is given us a full instruction in all things pertaining to Gods Kingdom, which in the other is not given. For the great mysteries of the Gospel could not be known by nature; and in things that could be known thereby, the light is but weak and glimmering, and not easily able to fix the heart therein, not so much for want of evidence in the object, as from the pravity of our mind, reason being laid asleep and all
our

our faculties being sunk into the brutish life. What is the utmost capacity of that light among the Heathens, is hard for us to define; and though it be harsh to determine that they were all utterly and universally forsaken of God; yet it is evident both by Scripture and the lives of the Gentiles, that Gentilism was a very forlorn state. This is enough to shew the high favour of God toward the Church in supernatural Revelation, by which he hath not only instructed us in things supernatural, not otherwise to be known in this life; but also more perfectly in the Laws of nature, now transcribed into the Books of the Old and New Testament, so that there is nothing of Religion or Morality that may not be found therein.

- Besides the Law of God written in Nature and Scripture, what certain and stable rule of Doctrine, Worship, Discipline, and Conversation, hath the Church to walk by: that there can be no certainty or consent in meer or all Tradition, or in the judgment of the ancient Fathers, or the ancient practice of the Catholick Church, is so evident as needs no confirmation: and there can be no acquiescence or accord in the determinations of any visible, universal, Supream Power. For whereas all Christians acknowledge the Divine Authority of the Scripture, they neither do, nor ever did, nor will, unanimously acknowledge that there is such a Power in
being,

being. And the main Body of them that maintain'd such a Catholick Supremacy, cannot agree in what subject the same resides, whether in the Pope, or a General Council. And as several Popes, so have several Councils of equal amplitude and authority, often crossed one another; and consequently some of both kinds must needs have erred: And it still remains a controversie undeterminable, which Councils are to be received, and which to be rejected, unless the whole Christian World hitherto disagreeing herein, will be bound up by the resolves of one Party, that can bring no better proof than their own pretended infallibility: To all which may be added that an Oecumenical Council truly so called, or a Representative of the universal Church, was never yet congregated. Wherefore let the Faithfull rest upon the old right foundation, the Doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles, whose infallibility is unquestionable.

Such being the fulness and perfection of holy Scripture, which was given by Divine Inspiration; and that for this end, *that the man of God might be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*, it must needs be safest in Divine matters not to be venturous, without its warrant. They best secure themselves from error, who keep to that rule which is both perfect and infallible, some pretending to lay open the folly of the way which they call pu-

H ritanism,

ritanism, affirm that the mystery thereof lies in this principle, *that nothing ought to be Established in the Worship of God, but what is authorized from the Word of God*: Indeed there are those of that denomination, who disallow whatsoever instituted Worship is not so authorized; but they are not so ignorant, as to suppose that all particular circumstances belonging to Divine Worship, which admit of endless variation, are defined in the Word of God; such as are those natural and civil circumstances without which, actions are not performable: But they suppose a wide difference between these matters, (such as time, place, method, furniture, &c.) and those ordinances of Religion which they take for parts of Worship, as being made direct and immediate signs of honour given to God by their use: And all of this kind some do judge or at least suspect to be unlawfull, that are not of Gods appointment.

My design obligeth me to shun the intangling of this Discourse with controverſie, and therefore I write not either for or against the lawfulness of such uncommanded Worship; But it is sufficient for me to shew that the purity of Religion is more safe by acquiescence in that only which God hath prescribed, than by addition of new ordinances of Worship devised by men, who even the best of them may too easily deviate from the truth: And
who

who knows not that too much yielding to mens devised Forms and Rights, which had a shew of Wisdom, made way for the departure of so great a part of Christendom, from the primitive Christianity.

All duties of the Law of nature, may be clearly proved from Scripture, though the particular instances thereof that are innumerable, and their infinitely variable circumstances cannot be there expressed. As for instituted Worship, it is unquestionable that there is no such defect in those parts thereof that are of Divine authority, as needs to be made up by the human addition of other new parts. And it is granted on all hands that there are things meerly circumstantial belonging to it, which are necessary in general, but in particular not determined of God, and must be ordered by the light of nature and human prudence, according to the general rules of Gods word.

None that know what they say in magnifying the written Word, will teach the People not to rely upon impartial reason, which no true Revelation did ever contradict. But we are so conscious of the weakness of human understanding, that in case of any seeming contrariety between Scripture and Reason, not to give the Scripture the preeminence, we know is most unreasonable. Is Scripture liable to be perverted? so is Reason. Is there obscurity and difficulty in the interpretation of Scripture?

- ture? so in human ratiocinations much more.
- Whosoever can apprehend right reason, can rationally apprehend Gods written word, which is its own interpreter, and whose authentick interpretation of it self, we are inabled to discern by rational inferences and deductions, as well as the sense of any rational discourse whatsoever. And the evidence of Gods Testimony is much more effectual, than the arguments of human reason to command assent, and quiet mens minds and appease their contests. And if we yield not our controversies to be finally decided by this sacred Rule, whether shall we go, or wherein shall we all be bound up?
 - The truth is, when men seek out vain inventions to please their own fancies, or to serve their own ends; and find their devised ways condemned by Gods word; then they fall to derogate from its authority and sufficiency, and talk much of the impertinency, and folly of those, that insist upon it, and cry up tradition, and reason, and that wisdom of Man, that is but foolishness with God.
 - When things will not be as well as they should, they must be as they may. There be some usefull truths and practices that may be too dearly bought, if purchased with the breach of the Churches Peace and Unity, and
 - the hazard of its whole Estate. Howbeit then is the best state of things, when the Apostolick

lick Doctrine and Discipline is the standard-measure of all, and nothing is retained, but what is plainly agreeable thereunto. And the safety of pure Religion lies in as through a reformation according to this rule, as the times will bear.

Let the severest reason that is impartial, weigh the following words written by one of a Catholick Spirit, and true to the Interest of Reformed Christianity, touching our departure from Rome. *We should leave upon us no string or tassel of our ancient Captivity, such as whereby they may take hold of us to pull us back again into our former bondage, but look upon our selves as absolutely free from any tye to them, more than in endeavouring their Conversion and Salvation, which we knowing so experimentally, not to be compassed by needless Symbolizings with them in any thing; I conceive it our best Policy, studiously to imitate them in nothing; but for all indifferent things, to think rather the worse of them for their using them, as no Person of Honour would willingly go in the known Garb of any Lewd and Infamous Persons: Whatsoever we Court them in, they do but turn to our scorn and contempt, and are more hardened in their own wickedness. Wherefore seeing that needless Symbolizings with them doth them no good, but hurt, we should account our selves in all things indifferent, perfectly free to please and*

satisfie in the most universal manner we can, those of our own Party, not caring what Opinions or Customs, or outward Formalities the Romanists and others have, and may have had from the first Degeneracy of the Church.

As for the word *Popery*, it is not more odious than ambiguous among Protestants. On the one hand some, that will speak hard words against it, have drawn it into so extremely narrow a compass, as to place it in little more than a secular interest of Power controverted between the *Pope*, and the Princes and Prelates of Christendom: and others that make it broader, are yet very tender, if not fond of many gross Corruptions of the *Roman Church*. On the other hand some have extended it so far, as to disparage things good and laudable, and requisite, and ignorantly call by that name whatsoever they fancy not. Nevertheless those useless and offensive things taken up by the Papal Church since the time of their known Apostacy, both Doctrines and Customs, and that are theirs more peculiarly, may justly be called *Popish*, though they were not imposed as Apostolick commands, or means of obtaining Pardon of Sin, or of working Grace. Why should we be tenacious of their Forms, to the scandal of those of our own Belief? How are we obliged or concerned to conform to their usages more than they are to ours? Have they any Authority over us, or are they any way a Rule unto

unto us ? Are not the holy Scriptures of right both their Rule and ours ? Or can they upbraid us for departing from them in these at least unnecessary Opinions and Customs, unless they upbraid us upon those grounds which we have rejected, together with their Usurpation, and and which if we receive again, we must quit Protestantism itself ? This striving to come so near them whether tends it, but to reduce us again into that Church ? For by all approaches to them, they are not drawn one step towards us, but are the more hardened, and still they rest unmoveable on the rock of their pretended Supremacy and Infallibility.

The impurity of the *Romish* Church lies chiefly in its Superstition and Sensuality. In the grosser part of its Superstition is manifold gross Idolatry ; and any way of symbolizing with Idolatry which is spiritual Whoredom, should be dreaded by the chaste Spouse of Christ, as the retaining of such Images as have been, and are apt to be made objects of Religious Adoration, and the making choice of the peculiar garbs and fashions of Idolaters in their worship. Moreover where the gross Pollutions are avoided, if their pomp and train of Ceremonies be retained, they will be apt to take up the heart of such as are busied in them, and to corrupt the Worship of God, and make it a dead work and carnal Service, and so the spirit and power of Godliness will decay and die a-

mong the People by this means.

- Sensuality the concomitant of Idolatry and all gross Superstition is likewise manifested in their Devotions. Of the *Israelites* Idolatry it is written, *The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.* Sensual sports and pastimes are mingled with the Devotions of carnal Worshippers, as is notably seen in the *Popish* Festivals. And this makes the sensual part of Men addicted to such a way. To pray a while, and then to play is the business of their Sacred Solemnities. But this course alienates the mind from true Holiness, and tends to much Profaness, and not only the Piety, but the civility of a Nation will hereby much abate.
- .. A Church that would maintain the purity of Religion, the power of Godliness, had need have its solemn days of divine Service distinct from the appointed times of carnal sport, mirth and jollity.

CHAP. XV.

- *The enmity of the World against Godliness, and the Calumnies and Reproaches cast upon it considered.*

THe security and increase of true Religion is a matter of no small difficulty. The enmity

enmity against it is general and perpetual, in the first race of Mankind it brake forth even to Bloud, and throughout all Ages it hath been propagated, & that with great rage, as well within as without the Pale of the visible Church. The adverse World knows not the new Nature what it is, for it knows not God, whose Image it is. The World is not only alienated from the Life of God, but opposite to it by the antipathy of the carnal Life, and so not only wants the true relish, but hath a strong disrelish of the divine and heavenly Nature. Moreover true Christianity is a light, by which all things that are reprov'd, are made manifest; and the World that lives in sin and loves darkness, hates the light, by which it is condemn'd, not only with an hatred of Aversation, but of hostile Persecution.

Nevertheless, the Unregenerate sort of Men in general, cannot and would not abandon all sense of Religion, which is so deeply imprinted in human Nature, and the form whereof may be acceptable even to corrupt nature. Wherefore they own the name, while they hate the thing; and keep up a shew and form thereof, while they deny the Truth and Power. And having a false apprehension of Christ they adore him, while they trample upon his present Members, that really bear his Image; and having a false Idea of Godliness, they honor the memory of the Saints of former Ages, while they

they vilifie those of their own times, in whom Godliness really exists, which shews, that if Christ and the former Saints were now on the Earth to appear what they were indeed, they would be no less hated and scorned than the Faithfull that are now living.

- The manifold ways of destruction and misery wherein the wicked walk, though contradictory to each other, do all conspire in this Enmity ; and Godliness is put to conflict not with one sort of Enemies, but with the various
- corrupt Parties of the divided carnal World.
- Yet worldly Interests often make their advantages of Christianity, and have their designs upon it, and complicate themselves with it in some external and accidental Ingagements for a season, and then the Enmity is restrained.
- And not a few, that fall short of Regeneration, may be so illuminated and wrought upon, as not only to cease from malignancy and hostility against it, but to promote and strengthen its external Interests. But for all this, the Serpentine nature hath hitherto been more predominant in this lower World, and Gods Kingdom hath had far greater Opposition, than assistance from the Powers thereof.

- Now we are noting the injury and despight that is done to Godliness, the calumnies and reproaches, heaped on the serious Professors of it to render them hatefull and contemptible,
- requires some animadversion. Their adver-

faries

series set them forth as Proud, Froward, Stubborn, False, Rash, Fierce, Petulant, Sullen, Fanatical, Hypocritical, Censorious, Pragmatical, Unruly, Schismatical, Seditious, Unpeaceable, Presumptuous, Selfish and such like.

If we would judge rightly of these imputations, we are to mind many things, *viz.* The intrusion of Hypocrites, the multitude of half Converts, the great weakness of Grace, and defect of wisdom in the greater part of Sincere Christians, and the imperfections of the best and chiefest of them. It is further to be considered that faults real or seeming, are more remarkable in strict Professors than in any others, as spots in a white Garment; also that the common malignity will aggravate the same above measure; likewise that the things, they are charged with (were they truly charged) are not peculiarly theirs, but the corruptions of the world in general; and that some degrees thereof are found in all, in whom human weakness is found, and that they are less and in a lower degree in this party of men than in any other. Add hereto that the faults of some are commonly objected against all, and the sins of men not yet made perfect, are cast upon that holy and perfect way, which condemns those sins, and hath broken the dominion of them.

Moreover, when it is undeniable that this sort of men in general have renounced palpable disho-

- dishonesty, injustice, filthy lewdness, wantonness, intemperance, luxury and other gross pollutions of the world, they are burdened (according to the true method of calumniation) with matter of suspicion or evil surmise, as Hypocrisie, Self-conceitedness, Fancicalness, and secret Pride, things mostly belonging to the hidden man of the heart; or with Spiritual wickedness, as Envy, Malice, Bitterness, Vain-glory, Ambition, Self-admiration and Contempt of others, things of more close and covert nature, and as not easily proved, so not easily disproved where they are objected; or with the ambiguous charge of Schism, Faction, Turbulency, Singularity, Peevishness, Perverness, Obstinacy; which opposite parties are continually casting upon each other, faults and duties, vertues and vices happening to be called by these names. And in this method of accusation, the innocent are sooner injured than cleared, and slanderers do their work, for the reproaches are boldly cast abroad, and something sticks.
- But notwithstanding all the obloquie and calumny, the whole world may be challenged to produce an instance of any Sort or Sect of men, that have exceeded or equal'd the serious Professors of the true Christianity in things honest, and just, and comely, and usefull, and praiseworthy. It must not be expected, but that during their imperfect State obliquities & aberrations

rations will be found more or less in them, as they are more or less remote from perfection. But if true honesty and vertue be a reality and not an empty name, and if it be not perished out of the world, it exists and resides in them.

Howbeit in this way there are inevitable occasions of stumbling, not given but taken, and such fall thereat, as *do err in their hearts, and have not known Gods ways.* The practice of true Piety lying out of the common road, is misjudged as a kind of humorous Singularity.

To speak Feelingly of Divine things, seems folly or meer fancy to them, who have no knowledge or tast thereof in themselves.

To express with zeal or vigor such things as seem to others incredible, though they be most true and excellent, is taken for Madness.

Tenderness of Conscience, strictness of life, fervour of devotion, mortification and heavenly-mindedness, is by Sensualists, Formalists, and carnal Politicians, judging by their own measure taken for Hypocrisie, designing the applause of men, or some eminency and advancement in a party, or some other Self-interest.

A Pious regard to the lesser as well as the greater commands of the Law, and a dread of despising the least Commandment, is commonly esteemed peevishness and needless preciseness.

To

.. To distinguish between the Holy and profane, the zealous and lukewarm, the carnal and Spiritual in the visible Church, and to judge of both sorts as they are, is a great offence to the world, for which the Religious are thought to be Proud, Boasters, Dispisers of others, Uncharitable, Censorious; and Formalists are magnified against them for their large charity towards all, which is indeed no Charity, but indifferency in Religion, not seldom accompanied with bitterness towards the Godly.

.. To speak as the Scripture doth of a peculiar people, and as Christ himself, of the fewness of Gods chosen among the many outwardly called, is accounted the confining of godliness to a Party, and the fancying of themselves to be the only People of God. Now such arrogance is justly charged on those that place Religion in narrow opinions, and platforms, and methods of their own choosing, and judge of all men as they are nearer or farther from them: yet nothing is surer than that God hath a peculiar People, who are comparatively a small number distinguished from the world by his own mark, which is no other than his own image in righteousness and true Holiness.

.. To discern a laborious, lively, faithfull Ministry from that which is lazy, lifeless and deceitfull, and to regard the one and the other accordingly, to note the ignorant, foolish, profane

fane and scandalous of that Function, *to condemn a vile person, and to honor them that fear the Lord*, to take notice of the Serpentine Seed, and to turn away from such, to abhor impiety, and to have no fellowship with the wicked in their evil deeds, provokes an evil Generation that are hereby reprov'd and judg'd, and they raise an outcry against the Godly as Factionous, unfociable despisers of Government, makers of Parties, and enemies to Peace.

To examin the doctrines, precepts, traditions, and customs of Men by Gods Word, to use all just means to discern his Will, and to choose to obey God rather than Men, when their commands are contrary to his, is reviled for proud perverseness, contempt of ancient Customs, and the authority of Superiors, disobedience to Kings and Laws.

To be zealous for Gods honour, and the purity of Religion, to be earnest and active in stopping the course of Sin, and promoting Piety and the means of Salvation, and to be concerned for Gods Interest in the World more than the common Sort are, make the Religious to seem pragmatrical, turbulent, and unpeaceable.

Not to run into the common excess of Riot, nor to comply with mad Mirth and Jollity, offensive Gallantry, or any Extravagancy that is in Fashion, is accounted Stoical Superciliousness and Morosity.

Strict-

• Strictness of Profession, seriousness and necessary preciseness of Conversation seems to many to be the same thing with Phariseism, where-with the most conscientious are commonly most reproached, and so the hatefull name of Christs worst enemies is cast upon his true and faithfull Followers.

• Wherefore it is worth the while to note who and what they were. It is evident from the Gospel-History, that *the Pharisees* were a strict Sect, and in great reputation for seeming-Holiness, no Separatists from the *Jewish Church*, but of chiefest sway therein, and of great esteem among the Rulers. They little cared for the ordering and government of the Heart, and placed Perfection in outward works, and in Rituals more than Morals, and chiefly in the Ceremonies of their own devising, and the Traditions of the Elders, and in zeal for the *Corban* or the Churches Treasure, and to these things they made the weightiest duties of the Law give place. They wore broad Phylacteries, and affected a proud reservedness and formal gravity. Those Fastings, Prayers and Alms-deeds, that should have been done in secret, they made a shew of openly to be seen of Men. They would be counted *Rabbies*, and owned for absolute teaching Masters and Leaders of the People, and would have all subject to their dictates. And they were Maligners and Opposers of the power of Godliness, and Perse-

Persecutors of the *true Israelites* to maintain their own institutes and interest. Now for our part we have no need, nor mind to vindicate the true off-spring of such Forefathers. It concerns all Christians; as Christ warn'd the Disciples to beware of *this leaven*. But the truth is, something of Phariseism may be found among some of all Parties, as self-confidence, vain-glory, self-praise, censoriousness, arrogance, partiality, perverseness of conscience, or straining at gnats and swallowing of camels. And peradventure, those that most object it to others, may be most deeply infected with it themselves; but however, it concerns all Sorts to beware of it, and do as much as is possible to purge it out from among them, and every Christian should strive to keep himself from any smatch of it, seeing it was so unfavoury to Christ.

It is thus very discernable from the manifold misapprehensions of the way it self, how Godliness falls under the hard thoughts and speeches of the mistaken World. *But wisdom is justified of her Children*. And if Godliness it self by misapprehension become a rock of offence, no wonder the World is scandalized at the hypocrisy of false Pretenders, and at the real faults and weaknesses of sincere Professors. But Christ hath said, *Blessed is he that is not offended in me*.

Undoubtedly the making of an higher Profession

feſſion doth not exempt any from a juſt conviction and reproof. That Hypocrites ſhould be detected, and the ſcandalous faults even of ſincere Chriſtians noted, is the intereſt of true piety. And charity both towards them that give offence, and towards them that take it to their hurt; requireth ſuch diſcovery. The Godly lay to heart no evils more, than the ſcandals of Profeſſors; and they know they are moſt concerned to take heed, *leſt any root of bitterneſs bearing gall or wormwood ſhould ſpring up among them.* And thoſe, that ſin before all, their diſcipline is to rebuke before all, that others may fear. But the great miſchief is, that ſome ſo ſpeak and write of Hypocrites and offences, as to reproach Godlineſs it ſelf, and bring the Profeſſion of it into diſgrace.

When they take notice of any thing amiſs in Men profeſſing Godlineſs, whether the matter of fact be true or falſe, or the ſcandal be in reality or appearance only, they preſently ſay theſe are your Profeſſors, they are all ſuch, and the whole pack affords no better.

The real or ſeeming hypocrifie, pride, covetouſneſs, unrighteouſneſs, uncharitableneſs, ſelfiſhneſs of ſome is caſt upon all.

From ſome inſtances of aberration they argue againſt a godly tenor of Converſation, and deny ſincerity where they ſee a falling ſhort of Perfection.

•• They diſparage a ſerious and circumspect courſe

course of Life, by pretending it may be but a meer guise or shew, there may be lurking vices, and they who have scaped gross Sensuality may be guilty of spiritual sins, as pride and envy; and so they ground their detraction upon suppositions and surmises of what may be, though not appearing.

They inveigh against hypocrisie in that manner, which hardens the vicious in their debauchery; and they encourage Libertines in idleness and excess of vanity, by telling them, that the Precisians may do worse.

Those godly exercises that lie out of the common road (as to instance in Holy conference) they bring into contempt, by objecting an unseasonable and preposterous use thereof, or the impertinency and weakness of some therein.

They censure inordinate transports of zeal, and whimsies in Religion more bitterly than lewdnesses, outrages, gross impieties, and daring wickedness of dissolute Persons.

They will burden the sober-minded, that are zealous for their God, with the inexcusable madness of some intemperate Zealots.

The failings of the Religious they aggravate above measure, and particularly some passionate disorders, that are commonly complexional, and have less of the will, and consequently of sinfull malignity in them, than many sins that make lesser noise, and raise less clamour: and

they magnifie the eveness, moderation, mildness and other humanities of loose or lukewarm Persons for the true Christian Spirit.

• They upbraid the Godly with their solemn confessions and aggravations of Sin before the Lord, and with their acknowledgment and bewailing of such scandals before the World, as have been given by some among them; as also with their publick Testimonies against Errors and Corruptions, that have risen in their times; and so they reproach them for their humility, sincerity, and impartiality in abusing themselves and giving glory to God, and condemning Sin where ever they find it.

• They scoff at those that speak of communion with God, spiritual experiences, desertions, and the like matters; and use in scorn Scriptural words and phrascs, and other holy expressions used by the Religious; and profane the terms of *Holy, Godly, Saint, Sanctified*, by the use thereof in scandalous Ironies, and so they make sport for profane men, and harden them in their irreligion.

They would render holy things contemptible by nothing, some little oversight and indecencies (mostly involuntary) in those that perform the same, as perhaps in the Preachers tone or gesture.

• And to say the truth, it is one of the easiest things in the World for licentious wits to play upon the most serious and sacred things, and

to make the most acceptable Service of God and his choicest Servants, seem ridiculous. These are some of the many vile and wretched ways of disgracing true Religion : And I will add one more, to wit, that madness of opposition, on what side soever it be, which to make a different Party odious, will not fear to expose Godliness it self to the contempt and scorn of them that scorn all Religious Parties.

Surely it is a fearfull thing to be a hater, reviler, and scorner of Persons, and things dear to God, and precious in his sight : What is it to *provoke the Lord to jealousy*, if this be not ? Wherefore he doth no ill service that detects this perillous folly : And men would easily shun such mistake and prejudice, as makes them misjudge and condemn the Pious, if they would but deal fairly, and exercise the same equity and candor towards them, which is due to all sorts, and which towards themselves all do justly challenge.

But Godliness will be still Godliness, let presumptuous wits imploy their Tongues and Pens to transform into never so ugly shapes, Invectives, Sarcasms, odious, and ridiculous Tales and Stories, Scenial representations and disguises will not confound it, nor sink its authority and reputation. On the other hand the fairest coverings, and best contrived Apologies, the most notable and advantageous Po-

licies, will not make corrupt things savoury, nor insipid things relishable, nor little empty things great and weighty, nor uphold the estimation of a degenerate, carnal, outside, lifeless state of Religion, where better things are
 •• known. The wit of man may adorn or palliate any folly, and deform true Wisdom: but in a lucid Region, where knowledge is diffused, Wisdom will shew it self, and the folly of fools cannot be hid.

• But let the Religious know, that it behoves them to take care that they suffer not so many things in vain; for these indignities may do them more good, than the vain applause of men: If their Enemies give them advantage (as indeed they do) for the learning of more Wisdom, Sobriety, and Circumspection, let them receive it; it is pity they should not make the most of such harsh Instructions. What manner of Persons should they be in all Holy Conversation and Godliness, that as much as in them lies, there might not be that *we to the World because of offences*; and that with well doing, they might put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; More especially they should do their uttermost to shun even the appearance of the sins more peculiarly charged upon them, as Hypocrisie, Pride, Wildness of Fancy, Affecting Singularity, and Self-Flattery; and to be adorned with a conspicuous sincerity, humility, and charity.

And

And whatsoever contumely they indure, let them by no means retaliate in the same kind, remembering their blessed Lord, *who being reviled, reviled not again*, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Wickedness cometh from the wicked: scurrility, petulancy, bitterness and all intemperate language, is more agreeable to their adversaries, than to them: And it is observed, that the flinging of witty sarcasms, biting jeers and scoffs, and railing words against a Party, do vex and gall more than hurt or break them; and provoke, but not convince them; and serve indeed to feed a humour, and make sport, and do *some present feat*, but do not carry the main cause, or prevail in the end, but turn rather to the damage and blemish of those, for whose service they were designed.

CHAP. XVI.

Religions main strength next under the Power of God, lies in its own intrinsic excellency.

THe propagating of true Christianity, and the sound state of Religion, agreeable thereunto against the enmity of the adverse

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World, is worthy of the utmost indeavours of all pious men ; and to search into the right ways and means thereof, is a necessary and noble speculation. But it must first be known, that its Stability and Victory in the World depends primarily upon the Wisdom, Truth, and Power of God ingaged for it, and therefore it cannot fall by the Power and Policy of Adversaries, nor sink and lose it self by the weakness or defectibility of its Professors ; but it remains firm and sure, and the same for ever.

Next after the Power of God, its main strength is its own intrinsick excellency. It is upheld chiefly by its own principles, which are mans perfection, and place our nature in its due state, and put both Persons and Societies into the only right frame, and reduce all things into their own place and order. They have nothing in them of iniquity, impurity, vanity or unfitness ; but are perfectly holy, just, and good, and give unto God his due, and unto men theirs, and that upon the most excellent grounds that can be laid ; as the Glory of God, our conformity to him, our fellowship with him, our reward from him and in him, and all in and through a Mediator, who is God and Man in one Person, and the Head of all the faithfull, who are his Body. The Godly practice conformable to these principles, is from a cause that faileth not,

not, to wit, the inhabitation and influence of the Holy Spirit of God.

Though true Christianity be far above the strain and reach of meer nature, yet it is practicable by Divine grace; and notwithstanding the imperfect state of its Professors, it faileth not of its end, which is to bring into the Possession of the heavenly Kingdom, the fruition of God and everlasting glory: yea, it doth effect great and excellent things in the present world.

Its rules are pure and perfect, its motives are great and high, and of indubitable verity. They that live after it, are a Law to themselves and an aw to others. No other institution Philosophical or Religious, is so powerfull to restrain inordinate affection, and to settle the minds and affairs of men in the greatest peace and order, as far as human imperfection can arrive. It denies all vicious excesses, and sensuall pollutions, yea all offensive levities, and unchristian irregularities, and all fellowship therewith: Yet morosity and sowreness of Spirit, it by no means approves; but serenity of disposition, and freeness and sweetness of conversation is both commanded and caused by it.

It reacheth the hidden man of the heart, and awes the Conscience; it forbids the inward motions of intemperance and injustice, it condemns and loaths Hypocrisie, and makes all external works to be nothing without sincerity.

It

It makes sincere love the principle, and placeth it at the bottom of our whole behaviour towards others, and therefore prompts and powerfully engages to mutual succour in the time of need. It maintains a charity unknown to the Infidel World, and which is a vertue peculiar to it in the greatest vigor and extent. It injoyns the love of enemies.

It exalts Humility, meekness and mutual forbearance as chief vertues, which were condemned by the pride of moral Heathens; And therefore it makes men just and peaceable: And yet withal it hath the best grounds of true fortitude and magnanimity; And therefore Damns that pusillanimity and foolish softness of disposition, which betrays truth and vertue. Self-denial is one of its grand precepts, without which none can live under its discipline and so it over-rules and controles that selfishness which is the Arch-rebell against God, and the root of all mischief, and turns the World upside down. It teaches men to live above the Honors and riches of the World, and takes off the heart from them.

Its principles most intirely accord with the true interest of the Higher powers, it declares their authority to be from God as they are his Vicegerents, and teacheth them to rule in Subordination to him according to his laws; And it awes the Consciences of Subjects to obedience. If Rulers command any thing repug-

nant to the Laws of God, it forbiddeth subjects to perform such commands, yet withall obligeth to submit with patience to the unjust penalties of non-performance, and to avoid Mutinies and Rebellions. It also teacheth the people in Spiritual matters to receive the Churches directive with their own discretive judgment, and so not to derogate from the just Authority of Ecclesiastical Superiors.

It is indeed the chiefest strength of all just Governments and Societies. The truth is, it doth hedge in with thorns the lusts of men, as Pride, Malice, Revenge, Covetousness and Sensuality; but it secures and enlarges their wholesome comforts and injoyments, their proprieties, immunities and all just priviledges. It advanceth Righteousness, Temperance, Beneficence and all other duties appertaining to mankind. Wherever it roots and spreads, it makes no small part of the Prudence, Courage, Industry and Frugality, and by consequence of the wealth and strength of a Nation. There is no aggregation of men in the world, wherein appears more of that which is good and profitable to men, than is found where the influence of this profession becomes predominant, whether in a Nation or Kingdom, or City or Family.

The Spirit of Christianity is the Spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind, which gives great advantage for Prudence, Soberness, steddi-

steadiness of Conversation. The seriousness and gravity of this way disposeth not to futile talking, childish credulity, easiness and rashness, but to a considerate freeness, and direct dealing with a generous caution and reservedness in due Season.

- .. Though its followers cannot link themselves to Factions, and serve all times and occasions, and go along with the men of this world in their designs throughout: yet they shall not fail of interest in a Nation not wholly vitiated; nor is it hard for them to maintain an influence upon the publick State, if they accommodate themselves to serve it so far as conscience and prudence leads them. Considerate men will not condemn them, and they that own them shall know where to find them, and in pursuing good designs shall find them fast friends. Religion doth not cast men down into stupidity, pusillanimity, or sluggish neglect of opportunity; but erects them to a Prudent, and temperate vigor of Spirit, and regular activity, whereby they become fit for the affairs of human life in a higher or lower Sphere, according to their different capacities.

CHAP. XVII.

Religion may be advanced by human Prudence ; what ways and methods it cannot admit in order to its advancement.

THough true Religion stands by an unchangeable Law, and depends not upon the mutable things of this World, and varies not according to their variations, nor is to be governed by the common policy of secular Kingdoms: nevertheless its affairs may be much advanced by prudence, and disadvantaged by indiscretion. There is a lawfull use of human Policy, being refined from Hypocrisie and all iniquity. The Author of this Profession, the holy and just One, in whose mouth was no guile, adviseth his Disciples to *be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.* St. Paul one of his chief Ministers was attentive to all the methods of gaining People, and *became all things to all men that he might win some*; and he was bold to tell some, that *being crafty he caught them with guile*: but it was the guile of abounding Charity and self-denial, managed with prudence for the service of Christ, and the saving of Souls.

In secular Kingdoms the reasons of State are locked up from the common view. But the maxims and methods of this Interest may with
great

great advantage be disclosed as well to Ali-
 ens and Enemies, as to Friends and fellow-Citi-
 zens. For by this discovery the powers of the
 World, who through their own misapprehen-
 sions, or others malicious suggestions are some-
 times turned against it, may become more pro-
 pense and indulgent towards it; and the more
 sober part of Men may be inclined to favour
 it, and greater numbers both of high and low
 Degree may be brought intirely to close with
 it, when they shall behold the goodness and
 usefulness, the innocency and integrity of its
 Principles. As for the Enemies counterwor-
 king we need not dread it. For the stratagems
 of this warfare are not carnal, and cannot be
 counterwrought with carnal stratagems.

It remaineth therefore as the business of this
 inquiry, to consider how we may improve the
 intrinsical and innate Advantages before men-
 tioned; and to gain all extrinsical and adventi-
 tious ones, that may be made, and to make the
 most of them all for the designed end. But
 due care must be had, that the wisdom of this
 World or human Policy have not too great a
 stroke. For many are the arts and methods
 that serve secular Interests, which the sincer-
 ity and purity of true Religion can by no means
 admit.

It cannot stablish it self in blood and cruelty
 nor murder the innocent for its own security. It
 nor hold People in subjection by the horror

li- of a *Spanish* Inquisition, which is not the poli-
 tri- cy of the city of God, the Spiritual *Jerusalem*,
 he but of *Babylon*.

en- It cannot make use of such impostures, as
 ne- are used to uphold the mystery of iniqui-
 ro- ty, and which is the way of those Church
 ore Politicians that make Men stupid and foolish,
 out that they may the better Lord it over them as
 ow besotted Vassals.

ith It cannot invite or ingage any to its Side by
 and carnal allurements, and provisions made for
 its the lusts of Men. The making of such Provi-
 or- sions would extinguish its life and power, and
 me- bring forth a spurious carnal Brood, that al-
 be ways with deadly hatred pursues its true Pro-
 fessors.

this It cannot lift up it self by serving the de-
 the signs and lusts of earthly Potentates; though it
 en- gives them their due honour to the full, yet it
 ti- tempts them not by flattery to think of them-
 the selves above what they are, nor doth it pro-
 But- tute its Sacred Rules to patronize any enor-
 thi- mities in their Conversations, or political Ad-
 at- ministrations.

mod- It cannot subdue a People, and hold them un-
 der by armed violence and usurpation, for
 can- this were to subvert it self, and undermine its
 own foundation, which is *truth, meekness and*
 elty *righteousness*.

ity It seeks not by any irregular motions to per-
 erro- turb a settled State, though adverse and inju-
 or- rious

rious to it. It cannot enter into the recesses of a wicked Policy ; its principles will not bear out in the cunning and close ways of dishonesty. It abhors such engagements, as draw on a necessity of proceeding in unrighteous or dangerous Counsels, and especially such iniquities as would not pass away in a transient action but would hold up a lasting usurpation or injury to its perpetual reproach and repugnance to it self.

It neither hath, nor in human judgment is like to have the sufficiency of an arm of Flesh or worldly Puissance, for its intrinsick and abiding strength, untill it comes in a more extensive power, and more ample victory than hath been yet manifested in the World. The mutable Advantages of certain times and occasions are but loose and hollow ground, and no settled foundation for it to build upon.

It is not furthered by a course of subtilties and of intricate and cloudy projects, which breed suspicion of evil ; but by an openness and frankness of dealing in all certainty and clearness. For in it self *it is clear as the Sun*, and regular and certain as *the ordinances of Heaven*, or the Motions of the Celestial Bodies. Whatsoever degree of obliquity or uncertainty happeneth to it, is only extrinsickal proceeding from Mens corruptions and frailties, who nevertheless, can be here absolutely exact and perfect in it.

It rejects the fury of passion, bitterness, clamours, wrath, tumult, and all outrage. In a word, it can admit nothing that is inconsistent with intire honesty.

And it is not weakened by this strictness. For Truth is great and powerfull; and by a weak and gentle, yet sound and solid manifestation of it self, it maintains a conquest answerable to its own condition in this present World.

CHAP. XVIII.

The Interest of true Religion lies much in its venerable Estimation among Men.

A Corrupt state of Religion nourishing Pride and Sensuality, and yielding it self managable to the designs of Men after the course of the World, is commonly upheld by an arm of Secular power, which by ways of its own it can make sure to it self. But pure Religion abhorring base compliances; and residing in the hitherto lesser number that walk in the narrow way, is not so well suited for a settled and continued potency in that kind. Wherefore by how much the more it fails of an assurance of worldly Power and Greatness, by so much the more it needs the advantage of

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of venerable estimation for its own intrinsic excellence.

A desire of vain glory, and an ambitious catching at the praise of Men is opposite to this interest, and destroys the ends thereof. But because things that appear not, are of the same reason with things that are not, in regard of influence upon the minds of Men, Christianity should be made appear to be what it is indeed, that it is not a meer Idea in the imagination or intellect, but a wisdom and power that may be practiced : and its glory is dislaid in a Life of integrity, purity and charity by the brightness of which graces in the primitive Times it became illustrious, and was exalted over all the learning, and vertue, and potency of the Hea-then World, in such an Age as had all civil disciplines in their perfection ; and it is never so much endangered, as when the sanctity of its Professors is fallen, or exposed to scandal.

- Eminent Holiness is after miracles the next great testimony to the truth, and is now in the room of Miracles, and its influence is very powerfull. Wheresoever it is, it invigorates others of this Fellowship that are near it, and it commands awe and reverence from all Men. This is a great happiness, when Persons indued herewith are in proportionable number fixed like stars of the first magnitude throughout the firmament of the Church, when there are Men of strong Parts, much prudence, active spi-

rits, A

rits, firm resolution, who are filled with the Holy Spirit, inflamed with love to God, and devoted to seek the things that are Christs, and fitted thereunto by real mortification and self-denial, also when Persons of a lower sphere for the perfections of Nature or Learning, have attained to a large measure of the primitive Spirit of Faith, love, meekness, brotherly kindness and charity, whereby they are made ready to every good work, and provoke others thereunto.

As the eminent piety of some, so the approved piety of the generality of serious Professors imports exceedingly to the reputation and reverence of true Religion. The spiritual Man discerneth the excellency of the Divine life, and the beauty of Holiness; and the natural Man also can discern humility, chastity, temperance, patience, charity, integrity, as things morally good and profitable to Men, and by these things the truth is vindicated and maintained. To defile the purity of this Profession is to stain its glory, and to stain its glory, is to render it weak and despicable. None therefore may pass for the allowed Disciples of this Way, but such as keep themselves pure from the foul sins of Sensuality, and from all palpable dishonesty. Howbeit the lawfull favour and assistance of any others may with due caution be admitted in its concernments.

A harmless life is barren and unprofitable is

of little value in it self, and also of little force to advance any Profession. Nay a fruitless life is scandalous and unchristian. They are the words of Christ, *herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my Disciples.* The root of such fruitfulness in good works is *love out of a pure heart, and good conscience, and faith unfeigned,* to which belong those praises, that it is *the end of the Commandment,* and *the fulfilling of the Law.* Now because they that walk circumspectly are often censured by the looser Sort to be uncharitable, it doth the more concern them really to shew forth the laudible fruits of Charity, and to maintain all good works before Men, though not to be seen of Men, and to hate narrowness of Soul and base selfishness.

What do ye more than Others? saith the Author of our Profession. When the Religious apparently excell the choicest part of unregenerate Men, then is Wisdom apparently justified of her Children. Natural men may have some amiable vertues by which they aim to commend themselves both to God and the World, yet in other matters of no less manifest and necessary concernment they are licentious and remiss. But the true Christian makes it his business to fulfill all Righteousness. And as the principle of true Piety causeth an intireness in all the parts of good Life; so being duly improved and stirred up, it will cause them that

that have it, not only to acquit themselves in whatsoever things are acceptable, and praiseworthy among the meerly vertuous part of Men, but also to perform those things that are far above them, and both a wonder and a reproof unto them.

Religion hath a good favour among all Men, by the due observance of all relative duties; and nothing renders it more unfavoury, than the violating of those bonds, and the non-performance of those dues, which arise from natural or civil relations; For these things are our proper sphere, our dayly walk and constant business, wherein we are most accountable to God, and usefull to men.

Industry and providence in the affairs of this Life, conduceth to reputation; but idleness and improvidence is very scandalous. Upon this account, Godliness is sometimes reproached by occasion of some idle Pretenders, and others that are Pious, but inconsiderate and imprudent. Religious exercises must be attended seasonably, and in due order: Idle and careless Persons, that wander from their callings, how full soever of good words, must be numbred among those that walk disorderly. When the Rules of Christianity are so agreeable to the temporal well being, and so indulgent to the present necessities of mankind, it is a great shame to expose it to contempt and prejudice, by such perverseness or

improvidence, as if it were inconsistent with industry and prudence, in the necessary concernment of this World.

In like manner a discreet and moderate use of riches, a generous frugality, and frugal liberality, avoiding sordid covetousness on the one hand, and vain ostentation and delicousness on the other, is of good report and gains esteem; but to live either too narrowly, or too profusely, taints a mans reputation, and derogates from the honour of his Profession.

To be constant or always the same, is a noble property, and is had in much honour. And hereunto true Christianity gives the greatest advantage. Its main principles are evident and unchangable; with the allowance of prudential accommodations according to time and place in things indifferent. It is a chief point of Wisdom to bring our might and main to the *great & weighty things of the Law*, and to watch with jealousy against every devise of man that would undermine them; but to be more cautious and sparing in points of less importance, yet the occasions of much contest among them that own the same Doctrine of faith. We are ill advised if we lay our main stock where our main interest is not touched. Several matters touching Religion have been carried in a vicissitude according to the change of times, and yet the substance of Religion not altered.

ed. It is not safe to fix a necessity upon such things, from which the urgency of after-times may inforce us to drawback, unless we will desert our Stations, before we have a discharge from our Master in Heaven. The espousing of some controverted Forms and Doctrines may end in a divorce, dishonourable enough, although it be conscientious: And the reproach hereof may be aggravated by the pretended constancy of others in erroneous ways, when it is indeed no other than the pertinacy of a selfish mind, or an adhering to a worldly interest. When there is a liberty some Forms may be safely chosen, as most advantageous, and yet not asserted to be the only necessary; and again, some others may be laid aside, as inconvenient: and yet not damned as impious, or simply evil. The parent of true constancy is Godly Wisdom, having the sure foundation of evident and unchangable Truths, with a just latitude in things not determined by the positive Laws of God. And so there may ordinarily happen to the same man some diversity of practice at different times, that deserves not the brand of time serving, which is often too rashly objected. For the same fixed principle of knowledge and integrity will direct to this way or method of a sacred Action at one time, and at another time to that which is far different; yea, and (when it cannot be avoided) to a

submitting to what hath sometime been rejected, I mean rejected not as in it self unlawfull, but as inconvenient or less profitable.

- When we are at liberty, we are obliged to take the best way; but when confined, we must do as well as we may in that state. And
- the submission signifies an acknowledgment of the simple lawfulness, but not of the comparative goodness or desirableness of the thing imposed.

Since our blessed Saviour hath given his Church a legacy of *Peace in Him, with tribulation in the World*, to suffer with reputation, is not of little moment. It sometimes comes to pass, and that inevitably, that the Godly suffer much in such cases which the looser sort account niceties, and needless scruples; in which cases, their sufferings are precious in the sight of God, who highly values the jots and tittles of his Law: but they are not so honourable in the sight of men.

- But when their cause is so unquestionable, that all sober Spirits of Orthodox belief must needs regard it, their suffering hath much more glory, and all the faithfull will be more constant and uniform in adhering to such a
- cause. Howbeit if they suffer for conscience sake in such things as the World accounts niceties; yet an upright and prudent walking with a peaceable Spirit, submissive in things clearly indifferent, and bearing with others

intolerable differences, will be an ample defence unto them, and gain respect, and peradventure mollifie those that do the injury. Furthermore let it be here noted, that to the *Sufferer* it is no less honourable, to suffer for the Life and Power of Christianity, in opposition to the immorality, malignity, and hypocrisy of carnal Christians, than in the defence of the Christian Faith, or any Article thereof, in opposition to Infidels, Hereticks, or Blasphemers. For the Christian life and practice is the end of the Christian Faith and Doctrine, and therefore cannot be of less regard. Yet this kind of Suffering is more dishonourable to Christ, in respect of the *Persecutors*, who are his professed Servants, and therefore in this respect, it is more grievous to the persecuted, than if they Suffered from those that disown his name, or are his more avowed Enemies.

CHAP. XIX.

The most ample diffusion of the Light of knowledge, is a sure means of promoting true Religion.

False and corrupt ways bear sway by a Peoples ignorance ; but Religion in its right

right and sound state as a Jewel that hath its greatest lustre by the brightest light, is maintain'd by the clearest knowledge. In bright times, the impostures and carnal designs of devised Doctrines, and superstitious vanities will be made manifest; and the hypocrisie being detected, the Merchandize thereof will be quite marr'd. In such times even the vulgar sort will expect from those in sacred Functions, at least the appearance of a sober, righteous and godly conversation, with diligence in holy administrations. Then the enemies of real Sanctity are put to hard shifts, and forc'd to appear either in some colours of Truth, or in the shame of their own nakedness. For this cause the Followers of Truth make it their special interest, as thoroughly to promote the most ample diffusion, and universal increase of Knowledge among all ranks and sorts of Men, as the Adverse party seek to oppose and debase it.

We do not hereby mean an intermeddling in difficult matters, a smattering in controversies, and certain curiosities of Opinions, a store of unnecessary notions, and of meer words and phrases, which things are commonly erroneous, and at the best but injudicious, and puff up the half-witted and self-conceited, and make them troublesome to themselves and others. But that which is here commended for an universal increase and propagation, is to under-

understand the Principles of the Essential Truths of Christianity, to see their evidence, to judge rightly of their weight and worth, and to view their coherence; and besides these, to know so much of other Truths as the different Capacities of Men will inable them, for the bettering of their Knowledge in the Essentials.

The means of diffusing this Light are well known, as the constant Preaching of the Word, and the opening of the Principles of Religion in a due form of Catechism, the strict observation of the Lords Day, repetition of Sermons, pious Conferences, reading the Word, and Prayer in Families, profitable Communication among neighbour-Christians in their daily converse, the spreading of practical Books written by Men of sound judgment, and Ministers private applications to those of their own Charges with prudence and meekness. ..

For the same end that main Principle of Protestantism, *the judgment of Discretion*, as belonging to all Christians, is to be asserted and vindicated against that *Popish* and brutish Doctrine of *implicit Faith*, in the Church's determinations. This is not to subject matters of faith to a private Spirit; but to refer them to the divine Authority of the holy Scriptures, to be apprehended in the due and right use of reason, which is a publick and evident thing, and lies open to the tryal and judgment of all Men.

Men. And to Men of sober minds, serious for the saving of their own Souls, the Analogy of Faith in the current of Scripture is easily discernable.

Moreover, the general increase of Knowledge lies much in the ingenuous Education and condition of the common People, in opposition to sordidness, slavery and brutish rudeness. Though some look upon the vulgar sort with contempt, and seem to value them no more than brute Animals, and think it enough that their Governors understand and consider for them, and not they for themselves: yet Christ hath shed his Blood as much for the redemption of that Sort, as of the Noble and Mighty, and Prudent; and he hath made no difference between the one and the other in the conditions of Salvation, and in the priviledges and ordinances of his Kingdom. As for the receiving of the Grace of God, the Scripture casts the advantage on the poorer and meaner side. *Not many wise Men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called,* was the observation of St. Paul, and St. James witnesseth, that *God hath chosen the Poor of this world, rich in Faith, and Heirs of his Kingdom.* And those whom God hath chosen, must needs be instructed in his Will. That *reasonable service* that he requires, none can perform without Knowledge. Ignorance is opposite to the nature and being of true Christian Piety, which

which is not at all where it is not received with understanding.

This general increase of Knowledge hath .. fallen under a great suspicion of evil, and it may be under the jealousy of Rulers, as disposing Men to Sedition, Rebellion, Heresie and Schism. But how great a reproach is hereby cast upon .. human Nature, or political Government, or both, that the more rationally apprehensive the Body of a People are, they are so much the more ungovernable, as if Government could not stand with the proper dignity and felicity of human Nature? What manner of civil State is that, which degrades the Subjects from Men to Beasts, for a more absolute Dominion over them? What manner of Christian Church is that, which to prevent Heresie and Schism, takes order that its Members be no Christians? It is an unchristian, inhuman policy in Church or State, the foundation whereof is laid in the Peoples ignorance. As for the true interest of Rulers, it is not weakened, but strengthened by their Peoples knowledge, which in its right and proper tendency makes them more conscientious, and however, more circumspect and considerate, and consequently more easily manageable by a just and prudent Government. But gross ignorance tends to make them barbarous and belluine, and in their mutinies and discontents uncounsellable and untameable, and therefore very incongruous

gruous to a State governed by the Principles of Christianity or Humanity.

CHAP. XX.

The advantage of Human Learning to the same end.

THough Religion rests not on human Learning, as its main support; yet it seeks and claims the necessary help thereof. Those whom God designs for eminent service, he indues with eminent gifts either by means or miracle; and he gives every intrusted Servant a measure answerable to his degree. The Apostles who laid the foundation were wise Master-builders; and surely it was not the mind of Christ that Wisdom should die with them, when he settled his Church to endure throughout all Ages, and promised to be with it to the end of the World. It is said indeed, that *the foolishness of God is wiser than Men, and the weakness of God is stronger than Men.* But that which is so called, is not foolishness and weakness indeed, but only so accounted by the pride of carnal Wisdom.

In this Learned age the Antichristian State in *Christendom* is forced to advance Learning in its own defence. And now without Learning either

either divinely inspired or acquired by means, we cannot defend our selves against it. Wherefore to destroy the supports of Learning, is the way to subvert Religion. Yea, though we were not engaged by such strength of the Adversary to provide for our own defence; yet solid human Learning doth of it self notably advance Divine Truth. The Learning that was spread over the World in the primitive times of Christianity, apparently made way for that sudden and ample spreading of the Gospel. And the Reviving thereof after an universal decay, no less apparently made way for the breaking forth of this clearer Light of the Gospel after the long night of *Popery*. Unlearned and barbarous times are noted among the causes of depraving Religion with multiplied Superstitious absurdities and deformities. Indeed that *great Mystery of Iniquity*, the *Romish* Synagogue is favoured by many wise and learned Ones; but the interest of great Power and Wealth, and other carnal allurements engage them to uphold that Babel, and so to detain the Truth of God in their own unrighteousness.

The *Papal* Kingdom of darkness hath amply provided for an eminent measure of Learning in their Superior Clergy, and certain religious Orders designed for Theological controversies, and the propagation of the *Roman* Faith, being necessitated thereunto by the learned-

learnedness of the present Age. But for the vulgar Priests, who dayly converse with the common People, that are ignorant and unlearned, it matters not how little Knowledge they have; and the Grandees care not that they should be conversant in learned Books, no not in their own *Bellarmino*. As for the Laity, tis a Principle in that Church, that Ignorance is the mother of Devotion. A corrupt Ecclesiastical State, upheld for worldly ends, hath no reason to desire the advancement of Learning any further, than is requisite to defend it self against learned Adversaries, and to hold the Vulgar in admiration of it. It would have the People wholly to trust their Teachers, and it is not well relished, when learned Gentlemen of the Laity are exact, and studious in Theological inquiries.

The supports and rewards of Learning may be so inordinately apportioned and conferred, as to exalt boundless ambition and avarice in some, and to nourish a drowsy idleness and Epicurism in others, and to cast the residue and those the greatest number into ignorance, beggary, baseness and superfluity of naughtiness. Such a disposition of things, besides the ruine of Religion would in the ruines thereof bury Learning it self (as it hath done in former Ages) if the industry of some were not kept waking by the increase of Knowledge among another sort of Men. But whatsoever

abuse corrupts that which in it self is excellent, the supports of Learning are always necessary in the true Church; and to settle a way for a perpetual succession of wise and learned Guides of the Flock in this intire and sound state of Religion, is to build the same on a Rock.

The spirit of this Profession being sober, solid and serious, is happy in disposing towards the attainment of much Perfection in all profitable science, and especially towards that which is most excellent and usefull in human affairs, to wit solid and deep judgement. In this respect the Children of true Wisdom stand upon the vantage ground; and the scope of their business directs them to excell in the more substantial part of Learning, which perfects reason and falls in with practice, and makes them able effectually to converse with Men both in Religious and Civil matters. These do not spend their days in a cloyster living to themselves alone, but are seasonably called forth to sacred or civil Functions, and so by Study in conjunction with practice and experience, they become more perfect in Science. The same intents and purposes direct them to understand the end and use of their acquisitions, and to have their Learning at command, and manageable for present business.

CHAP. XXI.

The general civility or common honesty of a Nation makes it more generally receptive of real Christianity or Godliness.

- R**eligion having considerateness and soberness in its nature, hath great advantage by the sober and serious temper of a Nation, City or Country, where its advancement and propagation is designed. Civility is a good preparative to Piety, and experience witnesseth, that among the serious & temperate sort of People, and in the most civilized places Religion takes best; and that it takes least in those places where debauchery and Sensuality reign in those of the higher rank, and a Heathen-like rudeness and stupidity seifeth the common multitude.
- Wherefore that sort of Men, whose spirit or interest leads them to uphold a corrupt and carnal Church-state, seek to gratifie the most sensual and vicious part of a Nation, because they cannot so easily gain the considerate and soberminded, who are more inquisitive into the principles and practices of different Parties, and look more than others into the inside of mens Devotions.

A Nation may be generally brought to civil
conver-

conversation and the external part of Religion. For the restraining of filthy lewdness, gross excesses and rudeness best comports with the health of the Body, the security of the estate, and the quietness of the mind. Therefore when it is in use, it is no burden but an ease even to unregenerate Nature, and so may pass generally among a People. Likewise natural Men being convinced and awakened, will easily observe Religious duties so far as the peace of the natural Conscience doth require.

The Conversation of the Pious is exemplary •• and of great authority, especially when their strictness and seriousness is tempered with the amiable virtues of Meekness and Moderation. By this they may do much towards the civilizing of those that live about them, and to conciliate the minds of Men towards them, and bring them to good thoughts of Religion. But the harshness of some rigid honest •• Men may exasperate and beget hatred in some, whom condescension and sweetness of conversation might have gained, or at least mollified.

Likewise by a discreet and seasonable use of •• Christian liberty in the temperate enjoyments of outward comforts in harmless Recreations, and sober cheerfulness in honest Company, the Religious may bring over others to a friendly converse with them, and may be a means

- to keep them from the more gross and scandalous Pollutions of the world. Yet as they ought to shun an excessive reservedness and austerity, so they must take heed of too great compliance with others in carnal liberty, upon pretence of
- a friendly converse with them. They may not spend their time in recreations, fruitless visits, merry meetings and the like exercises, wherein there is enough of idleness and vanity, even when there is nothing of dissoluteness or
 - gross immorality. For by such a trade of life they would lose themselves in a sober kind of Epicurism, or Sensuality under a form of Godliness; and they would harden others in their loose walking, or make them think that Professors are but as other men, except in a name
 - and outward Form. Wherefore they may be sociable no otherwise, than that it may appear they make Religion their business, and walk circumspectly and redeem their time from
 - vanity, for the serious Duties of their general and particular callings.

It may be further noted, that whatsoever promoteth knowledge among the meaner sort,

- promotes Civility. Likewise where a people
- are generally settled in a way of industry and frugality, and those of higher extract or education are bent unto exercises truly noble and worthy, that Nation will be disposed to a more considerate and apprehensive habit of mind, and to a more sober and regular course of life;

but

but the State of things is corrupt and tends to general debauchedness, when those of higher Rank and Quality live in idleness and sensual excesses, and have a proportionable number of the meaner sort waiting upon them in much idleness, for the service of those lusts and vanities. This course would vitiate the whole Mass of a people, did not some powerfull opposite means preserve some parts more intire and sound in Morals. Now an order and frame of things settled for frugality is not unworthy of a generous Nation. It is a noble thing for persons of higher birth and breeding to improve their parts, and wealth, and leasure in usefull and liberal studies and exercises, whereby something may be added either to their own Fortunes, or to the common stock and treasure of Mankind.

Where this considerate and sober disposition of a people is affected, it should be esteemed a great happiness, and worthy of the best improvement for the advancement of Religion. Discreet and well minded persons are in no wise to be discouraged or disoblighd. If they cannot be raised to a higher pitch, it is better to keep them where they are, than by any matter of disgust to occasion them to fall back first to disrelish, then to loath and oppose a strict profession.

CHAP. XXII.

The increase of Religion is promoted by being made, as much as may be, passable among men.

SUCH is the course of this world, that a necessity of being singular lies upon those that imbrace the power of Godliness. And because all singularity is obnoxious to disgust and censure, it concerns them to make it evident, that theirs is not humorous and affected, but necessary and conscientious; and so to shun all affectation of odd conceits and practises, or any unnecessary reservedness. The meer departing from evil and the impartial discharge of duty will set them too much alone and aloof off from too too many. And truly it is the grief of sincere and humble minds, that they can have no more company in the way that is called holy. But the humour of needless Singularity, hath a snatch of *Pharisaical* leaven in it. To be affable and of easie access, and free in harmless compliances avails much to remove or lessen prejudice.

It is not of little moment to discern and keep the right Path in the matter of Conformity to the decent Civilities of this world. To be
solicitous

sollicitous and exact about idle and tedious curiosities of Habit, Gesture and complemental Converse, to run with the formost after new Garbs and Fashions, is inconsistent with the Purity, Gravity and moderate severity of true Religion. On the other hand, to neglect the decencies of the Age is taken to proceed from a sordid or a peevish humour. A mediocrity in such things is most acceptable and advantageous. The truth is, the extravagancy of our times hath tempted some to strain Christian liberty beyond the bounds of Soberness, and there is need that some check be given to this excess of vanity. Nevertheless the other extreme will gain no honour. Morosity truly so called is very offensive, and is indeed but a severe and serious folly.

It is not to be expected that all should be of the same strain, Garb or humour in these indifferent matters pertaining to human life, wherein is found so great diversity among vertuous and worthy Persons. The more Free, Gentile and chearfull may not despise them that be more shie, reserved and solemn in their behaviour, nor may these judge the other. For Godliness stands on neither side, but is indifferent towards both.

And importunate zeal, and strictness about things of indifferent or doubtfull interpretation doth oft-times great disservice to Religion, and hinders that reception that was ready to be

given to it. When too great a stir is made about little matters, men of loose principles will suggest against all Godly care and strictness, as needless scrupulosity and preciseness. And the urging of some hard things, as indispensable duties upon weak and uncertain grounds, hath alienated the minds of some from that course of life, which was necessary to their Salvation.

- It is most true, that the Faithfull in Christ have their conversation in Heaven, as being redeemed from this present evil world, and having *Jerusalem* which is above the Mother
- of them all. Nevertheless as yet they dwell upon earth, and converse with natural men, and therefore may not speak and act in such a strain, as if they were taken out of the world.
- Provided they deny no principle of Faith, it behoves them to shew themselves in nothing estranged from the principles of human reason, and moral prudence according to men upon earth, and in that regard to act as Citizens of this world; though in regard of their heavenly Spirit and conversation, which is their life indeed, they must walk as fellow Citizens with the Saints now in Glory. I urge this the rather because they are by Scornfull men numbred among Fanaticks.
- Upon the same ground in all publick Affairs, they must consider what the Kingdoms of this world will bear; they must be discreet and

tempe-

temperate in their incounters with Peoples vanities, especially inveterate Customs; and in all things they should approve themselves fit and able for the service of human Society. This will make them appear considerable, and befool and shame those that slight them.

There is no difference in Christ, between bond and free, high and low, rich and poor; but they are all one in him: Wherefore the Scripture saith, *let the Brother of low degree rejoyce in that he is exalted, but the rich man that he is made low.* And accordingly it testifies against the having of the Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, with respect of Persons. Howbeit this indistinction of Persons respecteth Priviledges that are meerly Spiritual, to which there is no inequality of right upon any civil pre-eminence: but in all civil Priviledges, Christianity maintains the different rights of the severall ranks of men, and injoyns us to *render honour to whom honour is due.* And there is more in it than a meer gracefulness of behaviour, or pleasingness of humane conversation; for it is necessary to maintain Government, and to keep the World in order. Religion therefore doth not countenance a levelling humour, nor any insolence and irreverence towards Superiors, but condemns their pride and folly, that presume to carry it in that sort, upon the account of an equality in Christ, or a conceit of their own
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pre-eminence in him above others. The profession of Godliness cannot be more prejudiced, than by such a Spirit and behaviour discerned in those that pretend to it. The mighty, the noble, and the wealthy, will not indure to be confronted by mean Persons; but are tempted to hate and crush that Profession, which they think makes men forget those distances and due observances, which civility calls for. But Religion is made more passable and acceptable, especially with those at the upper end of the World, by the discretion and modesty of its Professors, in upholding civil distinctions and degrees of honour among men, and in rendering to all their dues according to those degrees.

CHAP. XXIII.

The observing of a due latitude in Religion, makes for the security and increase thereof.

- **C**HRISTIANITY is not to be extended to such a latitude, as to take in Hereticks, or Idolaters, or real Infidels, because they are named Christians; nor is it shut up in several Parties distinguished by certain Doctrines, Rites and Platforms, which the tyranny of ancient Tradition, National custom, Politic

Interest, or passionate zeal hath exalted: but it incompasseth all those that hold Christ the Head in the unity of Faith and Life. Wherefore the constitution of the Church must be set as much as may be for the incompassing of all true Christians, which indeed makes for its most fixed and ample state. And the taking of a narrower compass, is a fundamental error in its Policy, and will always hinder its stability and increase.

The true state of the Church (as of any other Society) lies in the universality, or the whole Body, and not in any divided or subdivided parts thereof. Accordingly, its true interest leads not to the things that make for the exalting of this or that Party, but to those common and great concernments that uphold and increase the whole Body. And it is but just and equal to accomodate the publick Order, to the satisfaction of all Parties, not in what their several designs and humors crave, (which is impossible) but in what they all may justly challenge by their Christian liberty, and which is possible; namely, that their consciencies may not be perplexed and burdened with things unnecessary, how highsoever magnified by some one Party.

They that seek Worldly wealth and glory in a Church state, think it as good to yield to all, as to relinquish any thing of their constitutions. For although they know that
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- moderation might make for a general Peace, and for the lasting good of a Christian People,
- yet they foresee that by removing offences, and reforming abuses, they should open a door to men of such principles, as may subvert the foundations of their building. There-
 - fore they think it safer to immure themselves by institutions sutable to their own estate, and to adhere to them unalterably. According to this reason in the Council of *Trent*, the Pope gave his Legates instruction so to proceed, that the *Lutherans* might despair of Peace, without a total submission. For he regarded not their return upon such terms as would diminish the Authority and Revenue of his Court, or weaken any of the
 - foundations of Papal Power. Such a Party
 - value all men, whether they draw nearer to them, or keep further from them, as they stand affected to the interest which they maintain.
 - But true Religion stands upon another bottom, and pursues other ends, to wit, Holiness and Peace, and that without partiality
 - and without hypocrisie. It hath no private carnal Interest to uphold, and therefore needs not such carnal devices for its own security
 - and advantage. By comprehensiveness
 - loseth nothing, because it seeks not great things upon Earth, nor serves the designs of any Faction; and as it loseth nothing hereby,
 - it gaineth much, both in amplitude and stability.

In Church affairs, those things are to be held fast which Christ our Lawgiver hath by his unalterable Rule determined, and made necessary to the building up of his Church, such as are the Spiritual Ordinances and Officers of his institution. But things of meer human determination are not unalterable, and the alteration thereof in a season that requires it, doth no whit weaken Religion, or darken the glory of it. And doubtless they ought not to be more regarded, than integrity of life, and Ministerial ability and industry, for the Churches Edification in Faith and Holiness. The exercises of Christian meekness and charity in such things, is far more glorious to the Church, than a forc'd uniformity; and that constraining rigor which doth but debase mens judgments into servility, and teaching them to strain their consciences, tends to make them less Conscientious and Religious. Besides, the said moderation in those matters, wherein uniformity of apprehensions is unnecessary and impossible, will keep the Church in a better consistency, and deliver it from those contests and breaches wick may end in its dissipation. But what glory or safety is there in a publick Order that is, and ever will be made the subject of controversie, more than the Rule of Unity?

The hinderance of the most important things of Christs Kingdom, is a mischief that always follows the promoting of narrow principles,

- ciples, and partial interests in Religion.
- Whereof these instances among many others may be noted, The obstructing of the liberty of publick Ministerial Service, to be given to Ministers that lie under restraint, lest some that accept it not should be weakened in their severed Interest; Also the opposing of a publick order of Catechizing the People in the
 - uncontroverted principles of Religion, lest the petty Liberties of a Party in their severed
 - way should be impaired. But the concerns of any particular Party are set behind the
 - common Interest of Christianity, by a true Catholick Spirit which is ready to joyn hand in hand with any that seek the increase of Faith and Godliness, in the unquestionable means thereof. And no detriment can accrew by concurring even with men of adverse principles, in setting on foot those things received
 - in common, that have a sure tendency to advance true Religion: of which sort, are all good means of introducing knowledge and civil conversation among a People rude and ignorant.
 - The fixing of Divine right upon matters of meer prudence, and the damning of things indifferent for unlawfull, is an error of evil
 - consequence. It causlessly breaks a People into Parties, and excites them to subvert their opposites, and the opposition seems unchange-
 - able. Hereby publick affairs are discomposed,
- the

the cause of Religion is imbroiled, and the propagation thereof obstructed; and perhaps at length, after tedious contests, either both Parties being weary of endless strife, sit down in silence; or the weaker being vanquished, is crush'd, or yields with shame and loss. Into the snare of this Error, men are brought by narrowness of judgment, or strength of fancy, or hurry of prejudice, driving from one extremum to another, to which may be added the private Interests of leading men. Wherefore we should take care that we lay no bonds upon our selves, in those things wherein neither the Law of nature, nor any positive Law of God hath bound us up.

Furthermore, it doth not stand with the settlement or enlargement of any Church Interest, to enter into such Religious bonds, as must needs conflict, not only with the opposition of perpetual adversaries, but also with the dissentings and dissatisfactions of friends considerable for number and quality; in as much as they are too narrow for the common Interest, and bias too strongly to a Party of one persuasion. For which cause their prevalence is not lasting, but by usual and easie changes, their weakness is discovered.

To tie a People to certain little rules and methods in Church Discipline, that are generally displeasing; as the necessary terms of Church Priviledges, when the ends of Discipline

pline may be as well obtained without them, is at the best but the vanity of a needless trouble, in doing that with much ado, which might be done with less; and it may occasion an incurable breach, and the rejection of the whole Form of Government.

- Narrow and uncertain boundaries of Church Communion, and arbitrary and rigid rules of admission, are contrary to that ample and fixed Church state, which is necessary to uphold and
- propagate true Religion. The Faith of Christ hath been propagated and perpetuated in large Kingdoms and Nations, by incompassing under its external Rule and Order, the multitude that made profession, though they might fall
- short of the New Birth, and *those things that accompany Salvation*: And it doth not root or spread in any sort considerable in a Region, where the order of admission is set by the rigid and narrow principles of a small Party, and the general multitude lies open as waste ground for any to invade or occupy. The strength and security of the Protestant Reformation, came by the taking in of Kingdoms and whole Dominions within its compass. The external Kingdom of God must needs be much wider than the internal. It is like
- the draw Net that gathered Fishes good and bad, and like a Corn Field, wherein Wheat and Tares grow together till the Harvest
- Moreover, the increase of professed Christians make

makes way for the increase of regenerate Christians and Converts to the power of Godliness, are generally made out of the mass of People, of an Orthodox profession: and few of them are turned immediately from Infidelity, Popery, or any Herefie.

CHAP. XXIV.

The Care and Wisdom of the Church in preventing, and curing the evil of Fanatical and Sectarian Error.

AMong the Wiles of Satan, whereby he depraveth the Spiritual excellency of pure Religion, and mightily hinders its advance in the Kingdoms of this World, Fanatical and Sectarian aberrations, are not the least. If these follies were but heeded by those that are most in danger, before they are engaged and drunken with error, it were in great part an antidote against this mischief. For the well minded that are but weak, and of easie impression, are lead aside chiefly for lack of attention and observation. Many are Children in understanding, and many are passionate and inconsiderate, and an innate levity, and inconstancy of mind is very common.

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It behoves the Guides of the Flock to possess the minds of the People with sober principles; and to have a watchfull eye upon the first rising of any Pragmatick Fancies that feed on notions and novelties, under a shew of a more discerning Spirit in Gospel Mysteries, than others have. Such being vanity puff'd up, will be starting questions and multiplying slight exceptions against the received Truth, and will please the itching ears, and slight Spirits of some pretenders to Godliness, who will become their hasty proselytes, and join with them to unravel one thing after another, in the texture of holy Doctrine. And by the repute of their good parts and seeming Piety, may stagger others of good intentions, but weaker judgments. And of this sort, none are more dangerous than vain-glorious Teachers: ambitious of leading Parties, and by plausible indowments furnished for such designs. These to raise their own fame, and make to themselves a devoted People, will become absolute Sect-Masters; and those that close with them, they hold with pleasing devices, and serve their humours, that they may serve themselves of them. There is also in some Persons a right Sectarian leaven, which is evermore to follow peculiar Opinions, and some separated Party in Religion, and they speak security to their own Souls, by being of such an Opinion or of such a Party.

Against

Against the Sectarian and Fanatick Spirit, it concerns the Church to keep a continual watch and ward; but not so as to imprison the truth, to lock up the key of knowledge, to stifle Godly zeal, to detain a People in dead and dull principles, that will not reach to the New Birth and Divine Life. For this were all one as to prevent or cure a frenzy by causing a Lethargy, or some other such like stupidity.

Moreover, a Superstitious formal ~~love~~, and sensual way of Religion, will in no wise be able to prevent or suppress this evil, but will give occasion to its rise and growth, except in times of profound ignorance and silence, as in the depth of Popish darkness. But whensoever the light breaks forth, and the People see with their own eyes, and the Ecclesiastical Governments will not admit a true reformation, but persecute those that seek it, then are many in danger of falling into this opposite extream. For they are cast upon it, both by the hatred of the present corruptions, and by the weakness of their own judgment, being not thoroughly instructed in the solid truth. And so they run hastily from superstition and externalness into delusion and wild fancies; from the common dissoluteness and remissness of those that call themselves Orthodox, into a vain boasting of perfection; from the usurpations of proud men incroaching upon Christs Prerogative

five and their false constrained Unity, into Anarchy and confusion; and from a wrathfull zeal and persecuting cruelty, into a disorderly promiscuous and familistical love, or indulgence towards all. On the contrary, a Church state that is agreeable to the Spiritual Ministration of the Gospel, and truly Apostolical, is the surest remedy against Sectarianism and Phanaticism, truly so called. When the Church abandons *Romish* Tyranny and Superstition, and yet is settled in a regular and stable Polity; when the publick Order thoroughly promotes the means of sound knowledge, and encourageth real Godliness, it satisfies the minds of them who justly expect in a Gospel Church and Ministry, more than an outward Form, even the manifestation of Truth and Spiritual Light, and Life and Power; and it prevents their wandring to seek after it in the devious paths of Sectaries.

It is of great moment, that of the most learned, able, and judicious Persons of Orthodox profession, there be many eminently Pious, whose authority and reputation may be able to hold in those, whose affection and fancy is apt to outrun their judgment; likewise that the Pastors of the Church, who are called *the Light of the World*, do so walk in the Light, as that there be no occasion of stumbling in them through notorious Pride, Covetousness, Self-Seeking, inordinate sensuality.

ality, or the vehement appearance of any gross evil. For the weaker sort is commonly undone by offences.

And because seducers are very active and spare no cost nor travel, but as they have done of old, do compass Sea and Land to gain Profelites, it behoves the Pastors carefully to keep their People, and the People carefully to keep themselves out of the hands of these Hucksters. The common remissness in this matter is deplorable.

Sometimes the manner of opposition against Seducers, is unadvised and prejudicial. To contend for truth by wrath, and clamour, and contumelious language and usage, inhanceth the price of Error, and adds to its reputation. But the surest way is to converse much with our plain hearted People, and to season them with right principles, and to detect the subtle methods of deceitfull workers, and the dangerous issues of their allurements, and by honest and inoffensive applications to prepossess those holds, of which deceivers seek to possess themselves.

And here it is of chief importance, that the influence of the Pastors and other prudent and able Persons, upon the common multitude of professors, be more prevailing, than the influence of the common multitude upon the Pastors and other prudent Leaders. Servile temporizing with vulgar fancies, degrades the

Authority and Wisdom of prudent Guides, and lifts up a vulgar Spirit, and will bring it to that pass, that the weakest and most inconsiderate shall sway the Churches Interest. Let Persons of approved worth be more faithful and noble, than by such servility and treachery, to raise to themselves a power in the hearts of the weaker sort. Let them rather commend themselves by their known Integrity, Wisdom and Goodness, and by being ready also in all condescension, to serve and please them to their Edification. And such faithfulness is the surest means to gain them love and honour.

Let the Religious beware of seeking to be admired and magnified among one another, or of overprizing each others esteem. This latter seems to be the cause that drew *Peter* to a fit of dissimulation and separation from the believing Gentiles, while he sought too much to please them that were of the Circumcision.

Sometimes we know not our own Spirits. It is good to beware of provocations like to be given or taken. Upon a supposed affront or injury, men of parts have been hurried into dangerous contests, and to make head against petty passionate opposition, they have run beyond their own thoughts, and wrought strange confusion. Discretion and charity seeks to convince and satisfy, and not to exasperate an offended Brother.

• It is well observed, that *no turbulent Opinion*

nion or Party doth usually arise in the Church, but by the Church's neglect of some truth or duty. Wherefore if an evil spirit seek an occasion of mischief, reform the abuse, and so prevent his working upon the simple.

And forasmuch as some of upright hearts being deceived with a fancy of a more sublime and perfect way, may pass into the tents of Sectaries so far as concerns Church Order and external Worship, a compassionate regard must be had of such as walk honestly, and retain those fundamental Truths, that may be a ground-work for saving Faith and godly Life. Now towards such, the greatest charity is exercised in labouring to remove the stumbling-block of their error, and to make it plain before them, that the Faithfull whose Communion they forsake, contend for the Perfection of holy Scripture, and the explicit Knowledge of the doctrine of Salvation, and the reasonable service of God according to his Word, and spiritual Worship suitable to the Gospel Dispensation, and the lively use of holy Ordinances, in opposition to unwritten Traditions, Mens inventions, implicit Faith, ignorant devotion and meer formality; That they declare by word and deed against the iniquity and impiety of this evil World, and therefore the world hates them; that they insist upon no forms or usages in Religion, but what are commanded by the positive Laws of Christ, or are necessary

fary in their general reason by the law of Nature ; that they seek no worldly advantages or advancements in the Church, but what are necessary for the support of the Truth, according to Gods ordinary Providence ; and lastly, that human infirmities must not be thought strange in them, that have not obtained Angelical perfection. These and the like things should be laid open before honest People that have been seduced into Sectarian error.

CHAP. XXV.

The advancement of the sound State of Religion by making it National, and the settled interest of Nation.

CHRISTS little Flock cannot go out of the World, nor retire within themselves alone from the Nations of the Earth ; but they must needs remain a part of Kingdoms & Commonwealths with the World in general. They must take themselves to be concerned in the civil Powers, for the Powers that are will take themselves to be concerned in them, and their ways. For which cause their aims and actions (as far as their Sacred Rule allows) must be fitted to the capacity of the civil Government, and directed unto the generall peace and

and quietness of the nation, whereof they are, & in which they enjoy their civil rights. By this means religions interest may incorporate with the general interest of a nation, & run in the same channel.

That pure Religion may take root, and spread and prosper, it is necessary to bring its external frame to the consistency of a National settlement. The just latitude hereof is laid in the doctrine of Faith, and substantial of Divine Worship, and things necessary to Church unity and order, but it goes not beyond these. And being fixed in this extent, it is in a way to gain besides the support and power of the Law, the Nations unstrained compliance and approbation.

As on the one hand Ecclesiastical tyranny is a root of bitterness always bearing gall and wormwood: so on the other hand unfixedness, and unlimited liberty consists not with that stability, wherein all prudent Governors would settle their own affairs, as also with that general tranquillity and repose which is the health of any People. If one were raised to empire by a meer Fanatick Party, he cannot settle himself, nor stand upon firm ground, till he wind his interest out of their hands, and turn himself to the way of general satisfaction.

To the same intent and purpose it is of great importance so to fix the terms of Church Communion, as not to set a perpetual bar against the main body of the People. A
Church

- Church state so barr'd, though it were asserted with a veterane Army, and could inclose all preferments both of honor and profit within it self to be at its disposal, yet it is hard to see how it could ever obtain a firm establishment.
- For a Christian Nation in general being shut out of the Church, or barr'd of such Privileges, as are supposed to belong to them as Christians, are intriged, and likely to be engaged as one Man to oppose that which they take for intolerable oppression. Or if they care not to be admitted, they will turn to a contrary interest and Party in Religion, or to infidelity, Barbarism, Atheism, or some destructive way or other.

Now the intention here propounded may take effect, if the Constitution shut out none from Sacred and Spiritual Priviledges, but such as make not Profession of true Christianity, or be destitute of that knowledge which is absolutely necessary to true Faith in Christ, or to the profitable use of those Ordinances whereof they would partake; or by publick tryal can be evicted in their deeds to deny Christ, to whom they profess subjection; or be guilty of such scandalous enormity or disobedience, as is reproachfull to the Christian Name.

It is likewise to be considered, that Discipline is a work of time, and that People are to be brought on by degrees, when they have lain long undisciplined. *For a Nation is not born in a day.* Right

Right Ecclesiastical Discipline grates hard upon Mens corruptions, and stirs up many enemies. Likewise the civil Powers are often jealous of it, lest it should move excentrick to their motions. Therefore being a tender point, it requires so much caution as nothing more. Cogent reason persuades those that are herein concern'd, most willingly to put themselves under the regulation of the civil Magistrate, and to contain themselves within all tolerable limitations prescribed by him, (I mean such as defeat not the ends of Discipline) and by clear and moderate actings within their own sphere to render their Office less invidious.

CHAP. XXVI.

Of Submission to things imposed by lawfull Authority.

Whoever duly prizeth the publick peace ~~of~~ his own liberty for publick service, will consider the utmost lawfull boundary of Submission to things imposed by lawfull Authority, that nothing possible to be done, be left undone. But what is sinfull, is in a moral sense impossible. We may not lie for God. Nothing erroneous may be asserted, nothing simply evil may be admitted in our

- our own practice. But in an established Church not infected with Heresie or Idolatry, nor defective in any vital part of Religion, it is duty to bear with much, that we conceive to be amiss in others practice, to which we make not our selves accessary by neglecting any means of redress within our Power and Calling. Yea, being constrained by others rigor we may stoop to the use of some things, which profit little, if they be not simply evil, nor by an evil consequent destructive to the main Service, to which they are superadded.
- The yoke of such subjection may cause grief of heart, but doth not wound the conscience.
 - Indifferent things are not made unlawfull merely by being injoynd; and it is necessary that some things indifferent *in specie* should be determined for orders sake. But forasmuch as things not in themselves unlawfull, may sometimes be so pernicious in their consequents, as by a vehement appearance of evil to draw others into sin, and by a strong tendency to evil, to lead and settle them in a way that is not good, I dare not say that the latitude of conformity to things in their own nature indifferent, is unlimited. Rulers have received their power of Injoyning, and subjects their liberty of conforming *for edification and not for destruction.*

In a case of this nature we are led on to consider, whether the scandal of compliance with things

things indifferent in themselves but of harmful consequence, be not of lesser moment than the scandal and misery that may follow upon non-compliance. Though of things simply evil neither may be chosen: yet of things evil only in their consequents, either the one or the other inevitably coming upon us, that must be chosen, upon which the lesser evil follows. Peradventure the scandal of Submission may be overballanced by the apparent consequence of a more important good, by which also it may in time be quite removed. The wisdom of the Prudent must herein direct their way. Though the Ruler be judge of what rules he is to prescribe; yet the conscience of every Subject is to judge with a judgment of discretion, whether those rules be agreeable to the Word of God or not, and so whether his Conformity thereto be lawfull or unlawfull. Otherwise he must act upon blind obedience, and might be excused in doing things either simply evil, or pernicious in their consequents.

A general certainty, that Rulers must obeyed in lawfull things, is no security to the conscience for Obedience to this or that Injunction, when we doubt of the Lawfulness of the thing enjoined. For we cannot be sure that obedience in this case is a duty and not a sin, because we are sure it is a sin to obey in things unlawfull, and such the thing now in question

question is or may be, for ought that we discern, and our ignorance cannot change Gods Law. Therefore the doubtfulness of the thing it self, makes the obligation to Obedience likewise doubtfull. And perhaps the danger may be greater on the part of obeying than refusing. For possibly, the injunction of an heinous sin may be the matter of the uncertainty; and in this strait we apprehend it more unsafe and less excusable to choose the greater before the lesser sin, on which side soever it be, though indeed it be lawfull to choose neither.

Indeed it is much easier for Rulers to relax the strictness of many injunctions about matters of supposed convenience, than for Subjects to be enlarged from the strictness of their judgment. And blessed are they that consider Conscience, and load it not with needless burdens, but seek to relieve it in its distresses.

And as this forbearance and tenderness in Superiors is the praise of their Government, and advanceth peace and concord; so doth moderation and a submissive disposition commend Inferiors, and much advantage their godly zeal. For it stops the mouths of clamorous Men, it obviates the ensnaring designs of adversaries, and it gives greater boldness in contending for weightier matters.

Howbeit sometimes that submission, which in all circumstances considered, both Prudence

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and upright Conscience declareth necessary, may be liable to a reproach as a matter of temporizing. The truth is, a Ministers reputation is of great moment to the ends of his Ministry; and he is not to be blamed, that is loth it should suffer shipwrack; and an appearance or suspicion of time-serving doth greatly indanger it. If a man should forbear some compliances, which he clearly foresees will bring him into a vehement suspicion thereof, in Charity it should be taken not for an undue valuation of his own credit, but for a tender regard to the honor of the Gospel. When an exalted Party shall set themselves to profligate the credit of those that are brought under, by constraining them to such Compliances, they have more regard to their own particular triumph than to the honor of the common Faith, and all true Religion, which is by this means exposed to the contempt of the irreligious, as if it were meer hypocrisie and matter of interest on all sides. As for Inferiours, in this case they are in a strait between two, and which way can they turn themselves to avoid all inconveniences. For the same persons that reproach them as temporizing, would in case of non-submission clamour against them as humorous and factious. Herein I shall offer the aptest remedy I know, namely, neither in word nor deed to abandon or disown the Truth, and in these burdensom
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yet not unlawfull compliances not to run with the foremost, but to proceed in such manner and so far, as the standing in necessary liberties may require, and as the more considerate part of men will justifie to be discreet and honest; but above all to indeavour by a godly and blameless life to make it manifest, that Conscience hath been duly satisfied and not trifled with.

- In doubtful matters and difficult times, that all good men should keep the same latitude of judgment and practice in all wisdom, for the true interest of Religion, may be wished but not expected. For some will be more, others less enlarged by the diversity of their apprehensions. Also some by their natural disposition are more timorous or more complying: others again are more hardy and less flexible, or more reserved and resolute in their opinions. Many are injudicious, and the best have their passions and some lie under disadvantages that nearly Bias the judgment this or that way, where the matter is somewhat disputable: others may have weightier reasons, either for assent or dissent though not obvious, and perhaps not so expedient to be declared. Mens cases being so exceeding various, they must needs vary in practice. Some inconvenience, but no destructive mischief will follow this diversity, if it do not (as one would think it should not) disunite affections. For then these several Part

ties, or persuasions rather, are one in their main cause, and may with one Spirit, though walking in several Paths, carry on the great concernments of it. If Religion were but the bond of a Faction, or the strength of a worldly interest, the asserters thereof might lose or lessen it by taking such several ways; But it depends not upon parties, and their designs, nor is obnoxious to such engagements, but in it self perfectly free from them. Therefore it is advanced in any way that gives it liberty and opportunity, to display it self to the world in the evidence of its own truth and goodness.

CHAP. XXVII.

The surest and safest ways of seeking Reformati^ons.

WHen a corrupt State of Religion is inveterate or deeply rooted in a Nation, the work of Pious men, is convincingly to reprove that corruption by the light of holy Doctrine, and of holy Walking; and to propagate and press home with zeal, the great and unquestionable truths of Christianity: but to be more silent and sparing in matters more controverted and of less importance, the vehement urging whereof will not convince the world,

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- nor silence the adversary. Likewise by humble addresses to the Higher powers in a fit season, they may seek the redress of such enormities, as are evidently Scandalous, Absurd and Odious, and yet perhaps the chief props of that corrupt State. For this may be done without scandal or hazard, and much is done if it take effect. Clamorous contests about doubtfull Forms and Customs, and in comparison but by matters, do serve to animate the opposite party, and afford them matter to work upon: but the vigorous maintenance of the vital parts of Religion, and the detecting of gross abuses, bears them down.

- It is time that ripens all things, and every thing in its season is beautifull and successfull. Then the redress of evils will run in its prepared Channel, and a plain Path will be found through passages formerly inaccessible. And
- then Rulers themselves may see what one of deep judgment observes, that *when time of course alters things to the worse, Wisdom and Counsell had need alter them to the better*; they may find the necessity and utility of Reformation, and by their Authority make it warrantable. If the friends of truth walk in sober counsels, and sure ways, and follow the truth in peace and love, and be serviceable to the common good, they retain their innocence and maintain their honour, which is their surest interest, and shall be found though the fewer num-

number to have a considerable influence upon the publick State.

Both Religious and Civil Affairs are apt to be carried in extreams, for which cause Reformations commonly are suspected, and their credit is much impaired. In avoiding Superstition, some have run into rudeness and undecency. In Divine worship the natural expressions of reverence and devout affection, and things necessary to decency and order, should be observed carefully by those that turn away from Superstitious vanities, that it may appear that a well informed Conscience, and the Spirit of a sound mind doth guide and rule them, and that their principles are no way defective; but sufficient and ample unto all regular devotion. These necessary decencies and natural expressions of Devotion, are plain and obvious to all intelligent persons; and the modes of Civil reverence and seriousness in use among us, do much guide herein.

A compliance with sober and grave solemnities affected by a Nation in general, helps to procure a good esteem, and to get ground among them; whereas opposition and singularity may beget a general dislike. Men do but mispend their zeal in opposing prevalent customs, that have nothing in them contrary to sound Doctrine and good life. Among other things I may instance in Religious performances at Funerals, which may well be ordered

without Superstition or any other abuse, and improved to the peoples benefit, who are then met together in the house of mourning. Some Churches being in the midst of false worshippers to prevent all Superstition, have forbidden the making of Prayers or Sermons at the interment of the Dead. But in things of this nature, Several Churches may have their peculiar reasons, and accordingly their different orders.

- As concerning Heathenish pastimes, and vanities sometimes affected by the rude vulgar, and perhaps countenanced by some of higher degree for ends well known, they tend indeed unto much profaness, and may trouble the minds and stir the zeal of good men. Nevertheless, when the power of reforming is beyond their line, it sufficeth that the weighty and unquestionable matters of true Religion, be constantly inculcated upon the People, and the spreading of sound knowledge indeavoured, both by publick Doctrine and by private Instruction. And those humorous fooleries, which opposition often heighteneth, would soonest fall to the ground by contempt and silence.

- In a happy season, when the power of Religion hath a potent influence upon a Nation, the laying of a good foundation for time to come, is mainly to be regarded. An opportunity in this kind may be lost, not only by a sluggish neglect, but also by an impetuous over-

overstraining of it. It is overstrained, when things are carried forth beyond what a Nation will ever bear. It may be more advisable to stop at moderate Reformatations, than to proceed to such extream alterations, as must needs stand in opposition (if so be they can so stand) to a contrary fixed inclination generally prevailing. The consequents of such proceeding, need not to be here discoursed.

Besides, the more healthfull state of Religion may stand not in a total change of things long in use, but in reforming the abuse thereof. And it should be minded that sometimes in curing a lesser evil, there is a real hazard of a greater mischief; and in hasty attempts of changes, things may be carried on beyond the commendable end designed, even to its utter ruin. For commonly men are not Masters of what they get in such precipitate ways.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Considerations tending to a due enlargement and unity in Church-communion.

AN unhappy kind of controversies about Forms of Divine Worship, Ecclesiastical Government, and qualification of Church

Members, hath been the calamity of our times. The differences in these points have made a sad breach upon Church unity, and divided Brethren of the same Reformed Profession, both in affection and interest, and have been the occasion of much misery. In regard whereof, some things that make for an amicable condescension among Brethren, and for humble submission to Superiors, are here propounded for consideration, but not as peremptory resolves. Though many or most of them seem to me to carry their own evidence ; Yet it becomes one who is sensible of human weakness, and of his own meanness, to write modestly in these points about which there is so great a variety of apprehensions.

- .. The Communion of Saints, is the Communion of the Catholick Church, and of particular Christians, and Churches one with another as Members thereof ; and therefore we may not restrain our fellowship to any particular Church or Churches, so as to withhold it from the rest of the Catholick Church.

- .. Our Communion with the Catholick Church, is as well in Religious Worship, as in Christian Faith and Life. As there is one Faith, so one Baptism, and one Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, and we being many, are one Bread and one Body. Though we cannot at once locally communicate with the whole Church in external Worship, because

it cannot possibly meet in one place ; yet according to our capacity and opportunity, we are so to communicate with the several parts thereof, and not unwarrantably withdraw from any, and this is a vertual communicating with the whole.

Church Discipline and Government, as to the particular Form thereof, hath much more obscurity than the Doctrine of Christian Faith and Life, and is much more controverted among the Godly Learned. And in more dark and doubtfull points, humility, charity, and good discretion, teacheth mutual forbearance.

In Ecclesiastical Regiment, all Church Members are not so concern'd, as Church Guides and Pastors are.

Christ hath not left the affairs of his Kingdom in so loose a posture, as to give a liberty of leaving or chusing the Communion of a Church according to our own affections, without regard to order.

A particular visible Church being a Body politick, cannot subsist without rules of stable Policy. Her censures and judgments ought to be clear, certain and uniform, or of the same tenor ; and therefore may not proceed upon such a kind of Evidence, as at the most is but conjectural, and of variable apprehension.

Our arbitrary conjecture of an others Regeneration, is but an uncertain way of ad-

mission to sacred Priviledges, wherein no uniform judgment can be held between several Churches, nor the several Members of the same Church, nor by the same Person with himself at several times. For mens apprehensions about the Spiritual Estate of others, are exceeding different and inconstant.

- But whether a Person make a credible profession, or be competently knowing, or grossly ignorant ; whether he be scandalous or walk orderly, is capable of certain evidence, and of constant regular proceeding thereupon.
- Let it be considered whether of these two, either to proceed with men according to our private hopes and fears about their internal state, or according to stated Rules and certain Evidence, be the surer way to preserve the Church in Peace, and to propagate true Piety.
- Also, whether Persons passable by such publick Rules, can in Ecclesiastical Tryal be judged to be ungodly, or to make a false profession, whatsoever our private fears are concerning them. And if their Profession be not proved false, whether it be not to pass for credible in that Tryal. Human Laws and publick Judgments presume them to be good, that are not evicted to be bad.

Private familiarity is at every ones choice: but our Church-communion being a publick matter, must be Governed by publick and common Rules, and not by private will.

If a Church impose such Laws of her Communion, as infer a necessity of doing that which is unlawfull, there is a necessity of abstaining from her Communion, so far as those unlawfull terms extend.

Churches mentioned in Scripture, had their corruptions in Doctrine, Worship, and Manners; yet the Godly did not separate from them for those corruptions, nor were commanded so to do. Indeed they are commanded to *come out of Babylon*, which is no other than to separate from Idolatrous, Heretical, Antichristian Societies. Yet in suggesting this, I do not encourage to a stated Communion in such Churches as have no other Ministers placed in them, than such as are altogether unfit to have the charge of Souls committed to them, that is, who are unable to teach, or teach corruptly; either teaching pernicious Doctrine, or abusing, mishandling, and misapplying sound Doctrine, to encourage the Ungodly, and discourage the Godly. For the Scripture bids us beware of blind Guides and false Prophets.

By continuing in Church-communion, we partake not of the Sins of others, which we have no power to redress, nor are we made guilty by their leaven, if it doth not infect us; and profane Persons are no more countenanced by our presence, than those lewd Priests the Sons of *Eli* were by the Peoples coming to sacrifice.

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•• In communicating in holy things, we have internal Communion only with the faithful, and as for the meer external Communion, it is with those that have as yet an outward standing in Christ, till they are cut off by the hand of God, or due order of Discipline.

•• When a Minister hath done his part to keep off the unworthy, in the dispensing of the Sacrament to such, he is in a moral sense meerly passive ; so that their unworthy participation cannot be imputed to him.

Nor in such an Administration is a practical lie or any falsehood uttered. For the Sacrament seals the mercy of the Covenant not irrespectively, but conditionally, and the words of the application must be so understood.

If we have not power to separate an obstinate scandalous offender from the Church, yet the withdrawing of our selves from him, is an Excommunication in some degree, and the effect thereof is hereby in part obtained.

When Ministers and People do their duties in their Places, without usurpation of further Power than they have warrant for, then all will be, though not so well as it might, yet as it can be at present.

Of several modes and methods of publick Action, Prudence makes choice not always of what is simply best, but of that which is most passable, if it be not so disorderly as to mar the substance, or frustrate the end of an Administration.

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In sacred Administrations we may yield without sin to others sinfull weakneses. And though we may not please them in doing that which is evil; yet we may in that which is lawfull, but less edifying; and so we may let go some good in the manner of performance, rather than omit the whole Service. Here is indeed a sinfull defect, yet not on our part, but on theirs who urge the way that is less edifying, and refuse the better.

The exercise of Church Discipline being • a means and not the end, must be govern'd by rules of Prudence, among which this is a chief one, that the means must not be asserted so stiffly as to indanger or destroy the end.

The exercise of Spiritual Authority is necessarily more regulated by the determination of the Civil Magistrate, in a State that maintains the true Religion, than in a State that either persecutes or disregards it.

If it were supposed, that Spiritual Power • is radically the same in all Ministers of the Gospel, let it be considered, whether the exercise of that Power may not be more restrained in some, and let forth to a larger extent in others, upon prudential grounds; provided it be not enlarged in some to an exorbitancy, and streightened in others to an extream deficiency.

Likewise if there be a dissent or doubting • about a Superiority or Pre-eminence of Spiritual Power in some distinct Ecclesiastical Office,

Office, let it be considered how far submission may be yielded to a Power objectively Ecclesiastical, but formally Political, derived from the Civil Magistrate, and seated in Ecclesiastical Persons by Temporal Laws.

- Lastly in reference to things imposed, there is a wide difference between a quiet submission, and an approving free choice. It may be the duty of Subjects to do that, which may be the sin of Governors to command.
- For in the same things wherein Governors refuse the better way, Subjects may do their parts and choose the best way they can.

If these considerations or others of the like Catholick tendency be found allowable, and will pass among Brethren of different judgments, they may prevent and heal many breaches, and unite dissenters in the bond of Peace and Love, and afford unto such as have been intangled, a more free scope and large capacity for publick aims and actions.

C H A P. XXIX.

Whether the purity and power of Religion be lessened by amplitude and comprehensiveness.

A Doubt may arise in this place, whether it be not safer to make the Church-doors narrow, and to keep a strict guard upon the entrance into it, and to insist upon the exactest purity, that Religion may continue uncorrupt, and that the Church be not defiled, nor its Interest ravished by Strangers.

In resolving this doubt, I forget not that *the way is narrow and the Gate is straight that leadeth unto Life*. But self-denial and real mortification and a conversation in Heaven, and not strictness of opinion in Church Order, is this narrow way and straight Gate ; and our Salvation lies upon purity of heart and life, and not upon Church purity.

Besides, God hath made the Gate of the visible Church, much wider than the Gate of Heaven ; and Church Discipline cannot be set in that strictness, in which the Doctrine of Salvation is to be preached. For Doctrine directly judgeth the heart ; and requireth truth in the inward parts ; but Discipline judgeth only

only the exterior conversation, and must be satisfied in the credibility of Profession.

- In walking by rigid rules of Discipline, though with an aim to advance purity, we may easily shut out those whom Christ hath taken
- in. True Piety may be found in many, who retain such things as some Godly Christians judge Erroneous or Superstitious ; and Godly sincerity may be found in many, whom some of greater zeal, but too censorious, may
- judge to be but formalists. It is not good to neglect sober and serious People, though in a lower degree of profession, who conform to Gods Ordinances, and regard a sound Ministry, and shew themselves teachable, lest we reject those that would help to uphold and honour Religion, more than many who will put themselves forward among the strictest sort, but indeed are either carnal projecters or busie bodies, or froward and fickle Persons, and a stain to the Profession in which they seem to glory.

- This narrowness of Church-communion, and other reservedness of some strict Professors, tends neither to the increase nor stability of pure
- Religion. Zealous Christians are a kind of good leaven, like that in the Gospel Parable, which if kept alone, is of no efficacy, but being diffused will season the whole lump. If
- they sever themselves into distinct visible Societies from the body of a Nation, professing the

the true Religion, their vertue cannot spread far; but they leaven the whole mass of People by being diffused throughout the whole. And then they gain reverence and reputation, and by their example profane and dissolute Persons may be convinced and much reformed, and among those that walk orderly, many may be carried on from common to saving Grace.

Hereunto may be added this inestimable benefit; to wit, the apparent hope of the propagation of true Religion to the Generations to come, which otherwise being unfixed, might in time wear away and fail in such a Nation.

Furthermore, sincere Christians are comparatively but a little Flock, and of that little Flock, the greater number are of low capacities and very defective in political prudence; and if they were wholly left to govern themselves in separated Societies, they might easily be ensnared into Parties and Breaches, and manifold inconveniencies. Indeed those of them that are best able to govern themselves, are most convinced of the need of publick Government. Wherefore it is the security of the faithful to live under a publick and fixed rule and order, and consequently to be embodied with a Nation, if it may be, in one way of Communion.

CHAP. XXX.

Factionous usurpations are destructive to Religions interest.

Religion is by the maligners of it too often called Faction. But the name is not more reproachfull, than the thing it self is hurtfull to it. And the prudent promoters of it, will avoid Factionous usurpations and all such ways, as would turn to a general greivance. But if any number of men in a higher degree of profession, should seek the ingrossing of profits and preferments within themselves, upon the account of their being Religious, and the assuming of such power as cannot be maintained, but by injury or disregard really, or in appearance offered to all others, and should so act in Civil Affairs, as if they only were the people, and think to do this for the advancement of Religion, they would much mistake their way. For besides the iniquity of this practice, the vanity and weaknes of it is manifest.

•• The intrinsic and permanent strength of strict Religion must be well considered. For that which is adventitious, is very mutable and may be soon turn'd against it. Occasional

nal advantages may suddenly raise it up to reputation and power among men, and as suddenly leave it to sink and fall again. Wherefore its friends and followers may well reckon that they have made the most of their advantages, when they can secure its interests in the common interest of a Nation.

A firm liberty and security founded in a national interest, is more agreeable to the condition of regenerate Christians, than an intire potency to themselves alone. For they would scarce well comport with so great a weight of power. Hypocrites for carnal ends would addict themselves to their party and overact them. The sincere would prove but men, corruptions would appear, and miscarriages would marr their reputation, which is not their least Support. Hereunto may be added many incongruities that would happen to them. The Gallantry and Splendor of the world will be no help to that humble and contrite frame of Spirit, and real mortification, and holy walking, and heavenly mindedness which is the power of Christianity. The various and versatile ways of worldly policy turning to innumerable occasions, are not very passable to truly tender Consciences. Besides, if the power were inclosed within these narrow limits, many of low Birth and Breeding must needs be lifted up, both to the envy of the excluded party, and

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the difesteem of Magistracy. And persons of low condition being raised above their own Sphere upon the account of Religion, may be easily tempted to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, and to grow busie, peevish and rigid in needless matters, which will provoke a People and fire their Spirits, and though the rage be pent up for a season within their breasts, it will at length break out into a flame.

- The power of Christianity, as to human strength, is best established and extended, by leaning upon some common interest with which it falls in, as the Vine is born up, and spreads
- abroad by the support of a wall or frame. It is therefore most suitable to the terms upon which it stands in this world, to be in a complex state with some other just, large and stable interest, such as is the common peace and safety both of Prince and People.
- And being a holy and wise Profession, it leads its Followers in safe and right Paths, and teacheth them to wait therein with patience. The nature of its interest will bear such patient
- waiting. For it is not carnal consisting of the great things of this world, which may call for an eager and quick pursuit, and daring inter-
- prizes. but it is the upholding of such a cause as needs not fear a sinking, if it catch not hold of every sudden offer, that is not clear in regard

gard of Conscience or prudence, but by an unchangable reason it indures throughout all ages, and if it fall it shall rise again. It needs not the making of Parties, and drawing people to its side by a pragmatistical importunity, nor to enter into any suspected ways; but wheresoever it is managed like it self in righteous and prudent Counsels, it makes the fairest progress and of longest continuance.

The reasons aforegoing, do hold in due proportion against the ingrossing of privileges, in particular in corporate Societies, and the making of Parties to interrupt the settled order of promotions and to keep back persons legally intitled, that the Religious alone might be promoted. Such Practises make sad breaches, and upon change of Affairs will turn to the great detriment if not the depression of the Party so advanced.

CHAP. XXXI.

Of Leading and following, and of Combinations.

Gods Providence useth to dispose into all quarters, some men not only of known integrity, but eminent for wisdom and reputation,

tion, who see more than the ordinary sort of good men, and are able and meet to give advice like those children of Issachar, *men that had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do.* These are much the stay of this Profession, and by their influence keep things right, and preserve the weaker sort from manifold aberrations. It is supposed that they seek not their own glory in being made Heads of Parties; but that in sincerity and self-denial they follow truth and peace, and use their Authority and ability, to promote a Catholick interest, and true concord among all Christians.

Nevertheless sometimes the understanding of the prudent fails, and Counsel is hidden from them. It pleaseth the only wise God, sometimes to permit strange resolves to proceed from good and wise men, that our main stress of hope might rest upon him alone, and on his infallible Word; and that we might not become the absolute Disciples of any Masters upon Earth.

One or two eminent men in a Country, though wise and faithfull, may not be followed as it were by implicit Faith, which may lead into great mistakes. It is to be supposed, that there be many discreet persons, though not of eminent ability, whom it may become to hear and reverence their eminent men, yet to see with their own eyes, that is, to judge by their
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own reason. In this matter there be two extremes, either to be too morose or too sequacious, the one being the effect of a fullen pride and Self-conceit; the other of pusillanimity, temerity, and such like weakness, and both tending to make breaches and lead into parties. We may have the persons of Worthy men in due veneration, but not in excessive admiration.

Avoid precipitate Leaders, for though the service of hot Spirits may be sometimes prosperous; yet in this temperate cause their conduct is pernicious. And there is as much reason to avoid such Leaders as care not, or at least consider not, what they do against the common interest of Christianity, to advance a particular Form or Party. But above all beware of such persons, whose apparent worldly interests lead them to adhere to some divided Party, & to cherish Faction. If much be committed into such hands, we shall be lead into a wrong course, or disabled to follow the right, though we see it plain before us. Yea, the cause of Religion will be intralled to the service of a Faction, and be left with disgrace enough when men have serv'd their turns of it.

A people of honest zeal may easily be overcredulous of great and powerfull men that pretend to favour Religion, and take it into their Patronage. Yet the more discerning sort will look to it, that, while Grantees retain them

with such favour and Friendship, they overact them not to the dishonor and damage of this Profession, which is more worthy than to be held in vassalage, and made to lackey after corrupt designs; and more noble than to bear such indignity.

- It is good for the younger sort of Professors to reverence the ancient and more experienced; and for all sorts in their choice of Guides and Patterns, to prefer solid judgment with integrity of Life and Conversation before taking parts, heat of zeal and high affections. Amidst diversities of Parties and Persuasions, it is safe to hold communion with the generality of Serious and Pious Christians, and yet to receive with love the several disagreeing Parties, who for the main walk in the truth, and to have communion with them all, as far as Catholick Principles will give leave.
- In pursuing the ends of this Interest, there is no need of private or unauthorized Persons entring into such stated combinations and correspondences, as the Jesuits and other Orders under the Papacy, have settled in their Societies throughout the World. For all Pious Christians are taught of God, and have one Spirit touching the main of this design, and are inclined to pursue the same with one accord. And indeed so it is, that only the sincere friends of truth, men of upright hearts,
and

and humble spirits, and honest lives, will observe and follow the rules of this Interest. And it sufficeth, if they keep close to their common rule of Faith and Life, and follow after the things that make for Peace, and know the present state of Gods Israel, and acquaint themselves with each other, as opportunity of converse offers it self, and so govern themselves; and carry on the advancement of Religion by such honest and harmless means, as need not shun the light, but may stand before the face of all opposers.

CHAP. XXXII.

The Wisdom of the Higher Powers in promoting the Religiousness of their People.

THE advancement of true Religion is the interest of the Higher Powers, if to maintain Gods honour and mans chief good be their interest, and if the defying of God and the utter undoing of men be against it. Yea, if the Tranquility and Peace of Governours and the stability of Government be regarded, human Wisdom will direct to promote that way which is no other than *the exercise*

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ercise of a Conscience void of offence towards God and towards Man. Godliness includes Prudence, Justice, Temperance, Fortitude, and all Goodness. It is an internal Law effectually subduing them that have it to all external Laws that are just and good, and the example of it goes far to the bettering of many others in things pertaining to humanity. It is regular and harmonious in every part, it leads to Order, Peace and Unity, and there is nothing in it inconsistent with right Policy. It is the way of true Wisdom, and apt to take most among the serious and well advised part of the People, and when it hath taken hold of them, it makes them Wise and Serious more abundantly. It corrects rash, rugged, wrathfull, and fierce natures, and to say the least, whatsoever turbulency may afterwards remain in such, it makes them of far more sedate and castigate Spirits than otherwise they would be. And though it doth not forthwith exterminate, yet it so debilitates all Complexional Distempers, that they cannot break forth into a course of mischief; and ordinarily it works an evident notable change. Of so great force is an attentive and active Conscience over all human passions. And doubtless it is the strongest bond to hold Subjects in obedience to their Governours. For the Conscientious are held in by the terrour of the
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Lord and the dread of the wrath to come, besides the sense of mans wrath, which they have in common with all considerate Persons.

Wherefore it is clearly the Princes Interest that his Subjects universally (if it can be) should be Religious, and consequently it is the Wisdom of his Government to endeavour it as far as it is attainable. And if he would bring them to such a state, he is to take care to exalt Gods immediate Sovereignty over their Consciencies, and under that Sovereignty to hold them in subjection to himself. For where Conscience is not preserved in its awfull regard to Gods Law as its Supream rule, true Religion is extinguished. And they are the Patrons of Irreligion, who propagate such principles as tend to alienate the Conscience from its true Sovereign and Proprietor, and either to make it servile to those who have no just dominion over it, or to debauch it into fearedness or dead security.

One way most needfull and advantagious for preserving Gods Authority over Conscience, is most effectually to bind Gods Laws upon the People; and to order what things else are necessary for the due observation thereof, and to lay no other yoke upon them in things pertaining to God. And as this way imports much to the sincerity and reality of Religion, so it doth no less to the keeping of Religious
minds

minds in unity. For in what center will the judiciously Conscientious unite, if not in the revealed mind and will of God, as it is apprehended by them? Will the injunctions of the Civil Magistrate, or the Authority of Ecclesiastical Superiors better resolve the doubts of such men, or silence their Disputes? This is not urged to prove that Superiors can injoy nothing in Religion, but what is particularly before enjoyed of God; or that the Consciences of Inferiors are not bound by their Commands in subordination to Gods Commands: but only that they take the best course for the unfeigned Piety and truly Christian concord of their People, that by their injunctions, seek mainly to promote obedience to the Divine Laws, and add no more of their own than what is clearly necessary thereunto. And what more just and prudent course than to forbear things that are unnecessary, and unserviceable to the promoting of Truth and Peace; yet with a perplexity and a stumbling block, an easie inlet to all dissolute or ductile Spirits, and a bar against many of known sincerity: and to use that moderation in the publick Rule and Standard, which takes away or exceedingly lessens, dissents, and consequently the occasions of dissension.

The Spirit of Christianity forbids Christi-
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an Magistrates to destroy sincere Christians, for their little differences and narrow principles in Forms of Church Order. And no reason of State will oblige them to that severity, how importunately soever some Interested men may urge it. Judicious charity or a prudent indulgence towards such, cannot undermine Religion or the Civil State. And a sound Ecclesiastical Polity set for the increase of true Godliness, will receive no damage by it, but it will rather gain upon those Dissenters, and if their scruples be not removed, it shall abide firm and stable, and grow in strength by the reputation of its own goodness and sufficiency, in that it is not hazarded or impaired by this charity and forbearance. The Higher Powers by granting some limited liberty do more universally protect the faithful, and having no interest in competition with the advancement of Christs Kingdom, are able and wise enough to provide against any dangerous inconveniencies. The bounds and rules of this indulgence are not so undiscoverable as to make it a vain proposal: yet, it is but an idle demand of those that require an enumeration of all particulars, than which, nothing more or less may be tolerated in any case. All particularities in any human affairs are not easie nor necessary to be known at one view, nor are they so fixed, but they may

may admit considerable variations according to the different state of things. There be general rules of Prudence that are a sufficient indication of what ought to be done at any time, as the present case requires. As the Wisdom of a Householder will direct him how far to bear with faults and weakneses in his Family; so the Magistrate by Wisdom will discern what may be born with in his Common-Wealth, so far as is sufficient to the true and just ends of Government.

CHAP. XXXIII.

The Church's true interest to be pursued by Ecclesiastical Persons.

Nothing is more precious, and among Christians nothing should be more valued, than the good of Gods Church, for it is Christs and Gods great interest in the world: but the misery is, that the Churches name is abused, and its interest mistaken most perversly.

- For none have more pretended for the Church than they, whose business is to get and keep worldly pomp, and power with carnal ease and pleasure; and to make laws and rules serviceable to these ends; and to corrupt the minds and debauch the lives of men, that they may bring them

them into blind obedience to such laws, and maintain their worldly dominion over Christs heritage, and who value all men howsoever qualified, as they stand affected to their estate, and accordingly stick not to reject the eminently good, and to receive the notoriously bad: In the *Romish* Church all this is palpable. Now let these be called *the Church*, by them that list to give that name, to a state of Pride and Luxury, of Tyranny and oppression, of carnal and Devilish Policy, under which the souls of people are betray'd to everlasting perdition.

Wherefore those in the Ministry that are sollicitous of the Churches welfare, should state the interest thereof aright, which indeed is not for the service of the flesh or the carnal mind; but for the promoting of the Divine life in men, and the increase of the mystical Society of Regenerate Persons, united in Christ their Head by his Spirit dwelling in them; and in order thereunto, for the increase of the visible Society of persons externally owning such an internal State. And therefore it is to promote and propagate the sound knowledge of God in Christ, and to make the people of their charge really good, and to advance them what they can in grace and wisdom according to their several capacities, and to deal with them in meekness and love, and to walk before them as examples of all purity and goodness, and to be more sensible

sensible and sollicitous about the corruptions and sinfull disorders, than the sufferings of the Church, and to be more zealous for Gods honour and the good of Souls, than for their own honour, wealth or power, and in a word to seek the things of Christ more than their own things.

The Ministers that discharge their Office well, are in Scripture declared Worthy of double honour. And that they be indowed with honorable settled maintenance, is necessary for the support of a Religion, that for its excellency requires to be supported by the help of excellent Gifts, as Learning, Eloquence and Prudence, not now to be obtained by Miracles, but in the ordinary use of means with much cost and labour. And questionless the withdrawing of these supports tends to the Churches ruine, nevertheless an inordinate and licentious collation, and accumulation of Preferments making for the Service of Covetousness, Ambition and depraved appetite, and for the decay of Sobriety, Vigilancy and Industry in the Pastors, is no less dangerous. This exorbitancy after the *Roman* Empire became Christian, allured and brought in the men of this World, who have their Portion in this life, and gave them advantage by carnal arts, to possess themselves of the chief Seats of Power in the Church, by which means Religion

gion degenerated into externalness and carnality, and that which was then named *the Church* was at length turned into a worldly State, which grew more and more corrupt till *the mystery of iniquity* was fulfilled in it.

Where Christianity hath recovered it self out of the degeneracy of the later times, and knowledge is generally diffused among the people, the sufficiency, industry and faithfulness of Ecclesiastical persons will be inquired after, negligence in their Administrations and irregularities in their lives will not pass without noting, the ignorant, idle and scandalous will fall into contempt, outward Formalities will be no covering, as in darker times they were, distinctive Habits and Reverend Titles alone will not procure veneration, the Ecclesiastical Authority will sink and fall without remedy, if real worth doth not uphold it. In such times men will not be to learn that an arm of flesh doth not constitute a Christian Church, and that the aid of the secular Power is not enough to prove one Party to be Orthodox, and the rest Heretical or Schismatical. External violence, which is the common support of false Religions, will in this case do little good, but it will render them that call for it the more odious, and more discover the weakness of their Cause. Wherefore the Clergy must resolve to do Worthily and fulfill their Ministry, or
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- they must extinguish the Light of the Gospel, or the Light of the Gospel will extinguish them.
- But if as faithfull Shepherds they watch over the Flock, and tender the state thereof, if they labour in the Word and Doctrine, and Teach with meekness and patience if they pitty and succour the weak, and heal that which is lame, that it may not be turned out of the way, if they use the rod of Discipline with judgment and Paternal affection, if they discard and lay by mens unprofitable institutes, and maintain all Divine ordinances in their due honour, and chiefly urge the observance of the indispensable Commands of God, and turn men from externalness, and make it their chief aim that Christ by his Word and Spirit may Reign in the hearts of Professed Christians; then shall they magnifie their Office and establish their Authority, and hold their Flocks in an unfeigned Reverence and submission, as feeling the force of the Ministerial warfare in their Consciences. And the inferior differences shall not be able to cause disgust or averfation, or break those strong bonds of the Peoples sincere regard toward their Pastors: but they would rather be swallowed up in love, which is the bond of Perfectness.

The Conclusion.

NO greater thing can fall under the consideration of Mankind, than the Security and increase of true Religion. The Glory of God among men and their eternal Salvation depends upon it. 'Tis as far above the concerns of the Kingdoms of this World, and their Politick Administrations, all Secular Affairs, and Philosophical speculations, as the Heavens are high above the Earth. An inquiry into the Sound state and true interest thereof, is a contemplation worthy of the greatest minds, and the advancement of it is the chiefest honour of the highest Powers. 'Tis the Royal interest of that Potentate, who is *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*, and of that Blessed Society which are incorporated under him their Lord and Head. And who that in any degree hath truly known the felicity of this Kingdom, and hopes for a Lot of inheritance in the glory of it, doth not value the concerns thereof above all his chief joys that are but of this World? A zeal for the common Faith, and a constraining love to all the Faithfull, hath excited a very mean and weak one to do what he was able on this important Subject, impartially searching after their common

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good.

good. Let the Prince of this Society, one of whose names is *Counsellour* deliver his Flock from all dangerous and disadvantageous error, and from wandering in broken Parties by unstable and divided Counsels, and shew them graciously the right way of maintaining a consistency among themselves, and of gaining upon the reconcilable part of men. And forasmuch as this Prince and Leader is *the Lamb of God whose Banner is Love*, let his people every where be acted by the Spirit of Love, and shew forth the meekness of Wisdom in all good Conversation, with Humility, Patience and Long-suffering, having this Principle deeply imprinted in them, *The Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God.* //

I cannot meet but with one who is brought to prove
ye last semblance of an institution of ~~it~~ for Episcopacy;
as if I be not much deceived, ye think of yt
place is clearly mistaken too. They who
acknowledge ye superiority of Bp^s over Pres-
biters, do impute it to an act of ye Church, &
not ascribe it to any divine institution: Jerome,
Ambrose or Cilaus, Spanish council.

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In Church's consisting of a multitude of believers, or so
ye need a probability of great increase by preaching ye
Gospel, ye Apostles did settle a College of Presbiters, whose
office was partly to govern ye Church already formed &c.
Then ye were imployed in ye Church yⁿ, did not consult
y^r own honour, & thought it not enough for ym to sit still
& see others work, but they were of Paul's mind, necessity was
laid upon ym, yea, was was unto ym if they preached not ye

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Gospel 1 Cor. 9: 16. Publick prayers were not then looked
on as ye more principal end of an assemblye then preach-
ing &c. Were ye apostles commissioned by x^e to go pray or
preach? & is it not in ye ministers of ye Gospel feared
ye apostles &c. Are ministers in yr ordination sent forth
to be readers of publick prayers, or to be dispensers of
Gods holy word? This is one of ye unhappie consequences
wh^{ch} followe mens judging of ye favour of God, rather by
ye practice of ye Church, than it came to enjoy ease &
plenty, y^e by ye wayes & practice of ye first & purest
apostolical times &c. People need as much instruction as
ever, & so much ye more in ye they are apt to blink
now ye name of x^e will carry y^e to heaven. Men
must be beat off from more things wh^{ch} they are apt to
trust to for saluati^o now, y^e in those times &c.

A Spanish council in ye 7th century decreed agst all
lay-persons meddling in Church-affaires. A canon dis-
cretely levelled agst all lay-chancellours in 3^d courts &
yr Officials. Such were Evangelists who were sent some-
times into ys country to put ye churches in order there,
sometimes into another, but where ever they were, they
acted as Evangelists & not as fixed officers. And such
were Timothy & Titus notwithstanding all ye opposition
made agst it, as will appeare to any yt will take an impar-
tiall survey of ye arguments on both sides. I thinke ye
ministers of ye Gospel would want one of ye badges
of honour belonging to their office, where they not
thus reproachfully used &c. As for any Divine right
of a particular way of maintenance, I am of ye same
opinion as to yt wh^{ch} I am in reference to particular forms
of Church-Government: & those yt are of another opinion,
I would not wish ym for much injury, as to want yr
maintenance till they prove it. Offices yt were of
apostolical appointment, are grown wholly out of use in ye
Church, without mind looking upon ymself as bound now
to observe ym: as ye wisdom of ye Church &c.

Rites & customs apostolical are altered; therefore men
or not thinke yt apostolical practice doth bind.
Is it not strange for men to dream of set-times, & cer-
eiall house, & publick places of assemblye at yt time, &c.

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time, wth their chiefe time of meeting w^{as} in ye night, or w^{as} 353
 early in ye morning &c. The conclaw at Rome & ye 2^o of confite= 358
 ry is an evident argum^t in y^e greake digenitray of it, of ye
 primitive constitution of ye government of ye Church b^e a Bp
 acting wth his collidge of B^{is}hops. W^h ye church of ye city 371
 was enlarged into ye Countrey, ye power of ye governours
 of ye Churches in ye city was extended wth it. Some wh^o 374
 nations seem to have been wthout any B^p at all. Some wh^o 375
 nations have had but one B^p. W^here B^ps w^{er} most com^{on},
 it is evident they looked not on it as an Apostolical rule
 for every City to have a B^p. B^ps were discontinued for 376
 a long time in ye greake Churches. The Church of
 Carthage was 24 yeares wthout a B^p in ye time of Au^g:
 ustine K: of ye Vandals; & w^hit was offered ym ye b^y might
 have a B^p upon admitting ye divians to a free exercise of
 y^e religion among ym, their answer was upon these terms,
 Eccl^{ia} Episcopu^m & doctat^{ur} Rabano, & Bassamon
 speaking of ye xan Churches in ye East, determin^d it
 neither safe nor necessary in their present state to have
 B^ps set over ym. It is certaine there was no certain
 rule for modelling their Diocess^{es} w^here B^ps were
 still continued. An evideⁿce y^t ye Church did not 377
 look upon it false as by a Divine Law to observe any one
 model of government, is, ye conforming ye Ecclesiasticall
 government to ye civill. Reformed Divines have in 385
 b^y b^y asserted ye mutability of ye form of Church=
 government. I doubt not but to make it evident, y^e b^y b^y
 b^y late unhappy times, ye main ground for settling
 Episcopall government in this nation, was not accounted
 any purchase of Divine Right, but ye convenience of y^e
 form of Church government to ye state & condition of y^e
 Church at ye time of its Reformation &c. It appeared 393
 y^t ye B^p of s^t asaph, Threlby, Redman & Cox, w^{er} all
 of ye same opinion wth ye w^h B^p (his most Gracious)
 y^t at first B^ps & B^{is}hops w^{er} ye same; & ye two latter
 expressly cite ye opinion of Jerome wth approbation.
 To b^y add: Whitgift, Copin, Dr Cro, B^p Bridges, Mr 394
 Crocker, Parker, K: James, Dr Sutcliffe, Cranthorpe
 Mr Lales all agst a Divine Right. Contrairwise of 395
 ye same opinion: Charnitius, centurion Magdebur: 396
 Genes, Zanchi, Bucer, Hargrave, Blondel, Bocklaby, 398
 &c. Those who look upon equality of 402pg;

The point of
CHURCH-UNITY
 AND
SCHISM Discuss'd,
 BY A
NONCONFORMIST
 With respect to the
Church-Divisions
 IN
ENGLAND.

LONDON,
 Printed for Thomas Parkhurst, at
 the Bible and Three Crowns at the
 Lower end of Cheapside. 1679.

quality of ministers as ye primitive form doe not 402
 non Episcopall government as lawful & usefull: Augustane 405
 Whiston, Calvin, B. Zanch. They who hold Episcopacy 412

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Episcopacy to be ye primitive forme, yet not unalterably
 binding all churches & places, but yt those churches who
 are without it, are truly constituted Churches; & Minis-
 ters are lawfully ordained by more Presbiterian: Mr
 Mason, G. Duntam, B. Norton B. Vsher &c. Concluf: in
 Three Principles deducible Hence I. That Prudence must
 be used in settling ye government of ye Church. II. ye
 form of government is ye best according to Principles
 of xan Prudence, wch comes ye nearest to Apostoli-
 cal practice; & tends most to ye peace & unity of ye
 Church of God. III. ye forme of government is determin-
 ed by lawfull authority in ye Church of God, ought be
 far to be submitted to, as it contains nothing repugnant
 to ye word of God. 281. U-

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 20 21 22 P: 9, 10. B: 38. 64. 121. : 23 B: 42, 205, 333, 334.
 24 25 P: 10. B: 124. : 26 B: 64. : 27 e p: B: 62
 28 29 e 1 30 31 32 P: 11. B: 65, 66, 67, 122. : 33 B: 277.
 34 35 P: 13. B: 177, 273, 275, 276, 281, 282, 312, 308, 358, 412.
 36 37 B: 177, 273, 276, 277, 281, 282, 308, 309, 312, 374, 375,
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 39 40 B: 57. : 41 B: 62, 65, 66, 68, 121. : 42 B: 276.
 43 B: 108. 117. 118. 119. 120. : 44 B: 118. 119. 121. : 45 B: 309.
 46 47 B: 122, 123. : 48 B: 371, 412. : 49 B: 339.
 50 51 B: 340. : 52 B: 341. : 53 B: 342. : 54 B: 244.
 55 56 B: 343. : 57 B: 344. : 58 B: 371, 377, 385.
 59 60 B: 314, 315, 316.

direction to a Diocesan Bishop
 power may properly be inter-
 posed in the exercise of
 their

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The point of
CHURCH-UNITY
AND
SCHISM Discuss'd.

CHAP. I.

Of the Church and its Polity.



He Church is a Spiritual
Common-wealth, which
according to its primary
and invifible State is a
Society of regenerate Per-
fons, who are joynd
to the Lord Chrift their
Head, and one to another as fellow Members
by a myftical Union through the Holy Spirit,
and are juftified, Sanctified, and adopted to the
inheritance of Eternal Life ; but according to

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its secondary and visible state, it is a Society of Persons professing Christianity or Regeneration, and externally joyned to Christ, and to one another by the Symbols of that Profession, and made partakers of the external privileges thereunto belonging.

There is one Catholick Church, which according to the invisible Form, is the whole company of true Believers throughout the World; and according to its visible Form, is the whole company of visible Believers throughout the World, or Believers according to human judgment.

This Church hath one Head and Supreme Lord, even Christ, and one Charter and System of Laws; the Word of God and Members, that are free Denizens of the whole Society, and one Form of Admission or solemn Initiation for its Members, and one kind of Ministry and Ecclesiastical Power.

This Church hath not the power of its own Fundamental Constitution, or of the Laws, and Officers, and Administrations intrinsically belonging to it, but hath received all these from Christ its Head, King and Lawgiver, and is limited by him in them all. Nevertheless, it hath according to the capacity of its acting, that is, according to its several parts a power of making Secondary Laws or Canons, either to impress the Laws of Christ upon its Members, or to regulate circumstantial and
 acci-

accidentals in Religion, by determining things necessary in *genere*, not determined of Christ in *specie*.

As the Scripture sets forth one Catholick Church, so also many particular Churches, as so many Political Societies distinct from each other, yet all compacted together as parts of that one ample Society, the Catholick Church.

Each of these particular Churches have their proper Elder or Elders, Pastor or Pastors, having authority of teaching and ruling them in Christs name. An Ecclesiastical Order of Presbyters or Elders, that are not Bishops, is not found in holy Scripture. For all Presbyters or Elders, being of a sacred Order in the Gospel Church that are any where mentioned in Scripture, are therein set forth as Bishops truly and properly so called, and are no where set forth as less than Bishops. These Elders or Bishops are Personally to Superintend all their Flock, and there is no grant from Christ to discharge the same by Delegates or Substitutes.

A distinction between Bishops and Presbyters, and a Superiority of the former over the latter, was after the Scripture times anciently and generally received in the Christian Church. Yet it was not a diversity of Orders or Offices essentially different, but of degrees in the same Office, the essential nature whereof is in both. The Bishop of the first

Ages was a Bishop not of a multitude of Churches, but of one stated Ecclesiastical Society or single Church, whereof he was an immediate Pastor; and he performed the work of a Bishop, or immediate Pastor towards them all in his own Person, and not by Delegates and Substitutes; and he governed not alone, but in conjunction with the Presbyters of his Church, he being the President.

Though several Cities in the same Kingdom have their different municipal Laws and Priviledges according to the diversity of their Charters, yet particular Churches have no Divine Laws and Priviledges diverse from each other, but the same in common to them all, because they have all the same Charter in *specie* from Christ. Therefore each of them have the same power of Government within themselves. And the qualifications requisite to make men Members or Ministers of the Universal Church, do according to Christs Law sufficiently qualifie them to be Members or Ministers of any particular Church, to which they have a due and orderly call.

Local, presential Communion in Gods Ordinances, being a main end of erecting particular Churches, they should in all reason consist of Persons, who by their cohabitation in a vicinity are capable of such Communion, and there may not be a greater local distance of the Persons than can stand with it.

A Bishops Church was anciently made up of the Christians of a City or Town, and the adjacent Villages, who might and did Personally meet together, both for Worship and Discipline.

All Christians of the same local Precinct are most conveniently brought into one and the same stated Church, that there might be the greatest Union among them, and that the occasion of straggling and running into several Parties might be avoided. Yet this local partition of Churches is not of absolute necessity and invariable, but if there be some insuperable impediment thereof, the partition must be made as the state of things will admit.

No Bishop or Pastor can by Divine right or warrant, claim any assigned circuit of Ground as his propriety for Ecclesiastical Government, as a Prince claims certain Territories as his propriety for Civil Government; so that no other Bishop or Pastor may without his Licence, do the work of the Ministry, in any case whatsoever within that Circuit.

It is not the conjunction of a Bishop or Pastor with the generallity or the greater number of the People, that of it self declares the only rightfull Pastor or true Church within this or that Circuit. For many causes may require and justifie the being of other Churches therein.

Seeing particular Churches are so many integral parts of the Catholick Church, and stand in need of each others help in things that concern them joyntly and severally, and they have all an influence on each other, the Law of Nature leads them to Associations or Combinations greater and lesser, according to their capacities. And the orderly state that is requisite in all Associations, doth naturally require some regular Subordination in the several parts thereof, either in way of proper authority or of mutual agreement. And the Associated Churches and particular Members therein, are naturally bound to maintain the orderly state of the whole Association, and to comply with the Rules thereof, when they are not repugnant to the Word of God.

A Bishop or Pastor and the People adhering to him, are not declared to be the only true Church and Pastor within such a Precinct, by their conjunction with the largest Combination of Bishops or Pastors and their Churches. For the greater number of Bishops may in such manner err in their Constitutions, as to make rightly informed Persons incapable of their Combination.

- A National Church is not a particular Church properly so called, but a Combination or Coagumentation of particular Churches, united under one Civil Supream, either Personal as in a Monarchy, or Collective as in a Republick.

lick. And the true notion thereof lies not in any Combination purely Ecclesiastical and Intrinsecal, but Civil and Extrinsecal, as of so many Churches that are collected under one that hath the Civil Supremacy over them. The National Church of *England* truly denotes all the Churches in *England* united under one Supream Civil Church-Governour, the Kings Majesty.

Civil Magistrates as such, are no Constitutive parts of the Church. The Christian Church stood for several Centuries without the support of their authority. But Supream Magistrates have a Civil Supremacy in all Ecclesiastical matters, and a political, extrinsecal Episcopacy over all the Pastors of the Churches in their Dominions, and may compell them to the performance of their Duties, and punish them for negligence and mal-Administration; and they may reform the Churches, when they stand in need of Reformation.

The possession of the Tithes and Temples doth not of it self declare the true Pastor and Church, nor doth the Privation thereof declare no Pastor and no Church. For these are disposed of by the secular power, which of it self can neither make, nor make void a Pastor or Church.

A Diocess is a collective body of many Parishes under the Government of one Diocesan. If the several Parishes be so many par-

ticular Churches, and if their proper and immediate Presbyters be of the same order with those which in Scripture are mentioned by that name, and were no other than Bishops or Pastors; then a Diocess is not a particular Church, but a Combination of Churches, and the Diocesan is a Bishop of Bishops, or a Governour over many Churches and their immediate Bishops. If the Parishes be not acknowledged to be Churches, nor their Presbyters to be really Bishops or Pastors, but the Diocess be held to be the lowest Political Church, and the Diocesan to be a Bishop of the lowest rank, and the sole Bishop or Pastor of all the included Parishes; I confess, I have no knowledge of the Divine right of such a Church or Bishop, or of any precept or precedent thereof in Scripture. For every particular Church mentioned in Scripture was but one distinct stated Society, having its own proper and immediate Bishop or Bishops, Elder or Elders, Pastor or Pastors, who did Personally and immediately Superintend over the whole Flock, which ordinarily held either at once together, or by turns Personal, present Communion with each other in Gods Worship. But a Diocess consists of several stated Societies, to wit, the Parishes which are Constituted severally of a proper and immediate Presbyter or Elder having cure of Souls, and commonly called a Rector, and the People

ple which are his proper and immediate charge or cure. And the People of the Diocess do not live under the Personal and immediate oversight of their Diocesan, but under his Delegates and Substitutes. Nor do they ordinarily hold Personal present Communion with each other in Gods Worship, either at once together or by turns. Nevertheless, which way soever a Diocess be considered, I have nothing to object against submission to the Government of the Diocesan, as an Ecclesiastical Officer established by the Law of the Land under the Kings Supremacy.

There is nothing in the nature of the Office of Presbyterate (which according to the Scripture is a Pastoral Office) that shews it ought to be exercised no otherwise than in Subordination to a Diocesan Bishop. Christ, who is the Author and only proper giver of all Spiritual Authority in the Church, hath not so limited the said Office, and men cannot by any act of theirs enlarge or lessen it as to its nature or essential state, or define it otherwise than it is stated of Christ in his word.

No power Ecclesiastical or Civil can discharge any Minister of Christ from the exercise of his Ministry in those circumstances, wherein Christ commands him to exercise it, nor any Christians from those duties of Religion, to which the Command of Christ obligeth them.

As

As the Magistrate is to judge what Laws touching Religion are fit for him to enact and execute, so the Ministers of Christ are to use a judgment of discretion about their own Pastoral acts; and all Christians are to do the same about their own acts of Church-Communion. The too common abuse of the judgment of discretion cannot abrogate the right use thereof, it being so necessary that without it men cannot act as men, nor offer to God a reasonable Service.

C H A P. II.

Of true Church-Unity.

WHen the names of Unity and Schism are by partiality and selfishness commonly and grossly abused and misapplied, the nature of the things to which those names do of right belong, ought to be diligently inquired into, and clearly and distinctly laid open. For a groundwork in this inquiry I fix upon two very noted texts of Scripture. The one is *Eph. 4. 3.* Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace. The other is *Rom. 16. 17.* Mark them that cause Divisions and Offences contrary to the Doctrine that ye have learned, and avoid them.

them. The former guides us to the knowledge of true Church-unity, and the latter shews us the true nature of Schism.

By the former of these Texts, all Christians are obliged to maintain that Spiritual Unity, which they have one with another under Christ their Head, by the Holy Ghost in all due acts of holy Communion in Peace and Concord. Several important things are here to be taken notice of.

1. There is a Spiritual unity between all Christians in the form of one mystical Body, as there is a natural unity between all the members of the natural Body. The members being many are one body and members one of another. 2. This Unity is under Christ as the Head of it. What the head is to the natural Body, that is Christ and much more to his mystical Body the Church. 3. This Unity of Christians one with another under Christ, is by the Holy Ghost, and therefore called the Unity of the Spirit. The Spirit of Christ the Head, doth seize upon and reside in all the Faithfull, by which they become Christs mystical Body, and are joyned one to another as fellow-members. 4. This Unity of the Spirit among Christians is witnessed, maintained, and strengthened by their holy communion of Love and Peace one with another, but is darkened, weakened, and lessened by their uncharitable Dissentions.

Hence

Hence it is evident that the Unity here commended, is primarily that of the Church in its internal and invisible State, or the Union and Communion of Saints, having in themselves the Spirit, and Life, and Power of Christianity.

- Tis the unity of the Spirit we are charged
- to keep in the bond of Peace. But concord in any external order with ^oa vital Union with Christ and holy Souls, his living members, is not the unity of the Spirit, which is to partake of the same new Nature and Divine Life. Secondly, it is the Unity of the Church in its external and visible State, which is consequent and subservient to the internal, and stands in the profession and appearance of it, in the professed observation of the duties arising from it. Where there is not a credible Profession of Faith unfeigned and true Holiness, there is not so much as the external
- and visible Unity of the Spirit. Therefore a sensual Earthly generation of men, who are apparently lead by the Spirit of the World, and not by the Spirit that is of God, have little cause to glory in their adhering to an external Church order, whatsoever it be.

Holy love, which is unselfed and impartial, is the Life and Soul of this unity, without which it is but a dead thing, as the Body without the Soul is dead. And this love is the bond of perfectness, that Cement, that holds altogether in this mystical Society.

For

For this being seated in the several members, ••
 disposeth them to look, not to their own things,
 but also to the things of others, and not to
 the undue advancement of a Party, but to the
 common good of the whole Body. Whoso ••
 ever wants this love, hath no vital Union
 with Christ and the Church, and no part in
 the Communion of Saints. The Church is
 much more ennobled, strengthened, and every
 way blessed by the Communion of holy love
 among all its living members, or real Christi-
 ans, than by an outside uniformity in the
 minute circumstances, or accidental modes of
 Religion. By this love it is more beautifull
 and lovely in the eyes of all intelligent be-
 holders, than by outward pomp and orna-
 ment, or any worldly splendor.

The Unity of the Church as visible, whe-
 ther Catholick or particular, may be confi-
 dered in a three-fold respect, or in three very
 different points. The first and chief point 1.
 thereof, is in the essentials and all weighty
 matters of Christian Faith and Life. The
 second and next in account is in the essentials 2.
 and integrals of Church state, that is, in
 the Christian Church-Worship, Ministry
 and Discipline, considered as of Christs insti-
 tution, and abstracted from all things super-
 added by men. The third and lowest point 3.
 is in those extrinsecal and accidental Forms
 and Orders of Religion, which are necessary
 in

in *genere*, but left in *specie* to human determination.

Of these several points of Unity, there is to be a different valuation according to their different value. Our first and chief regard is due to the first and chief point, which respects Christian Faith and Life; The next regard is due to that which is next in value, that which respects the very constitution or frame of a Church; And regard is to be had of that also which respects the accidentals of Religion, yet in its due place and not before things of greater weight and worth. Things are of a very different nature and importance to the Churches good Estate; and a greater or lesser stress must be laid upon Unity in them, as the things themselves are of greater or lesser moment.

The Rule or Law of Church Unity is not the will of man, but the will of God. Whosoever keeps that Unity which hath Gods word for its Rule, keeps the Unity of the Spirit; And whosoever boasts of a Unity that is not squared by this Rule, his boasting is but vain.

An Hypothesis that nothing in the Service of God is lawfull, but what is expressly prescribed in Scripture, is by some falsely ascribed to a sort of men who earnestly contend for the Scriptures sufficiency, and perfection for the regulating of Divine Worship, and the

the whole state of Religion. God in his Word hath prescribed all those parts of his Worship, that are necessary to be performed to him. He hath likewise therein instituted those Officers that are to be the Administrators of his publick Worship in Church Assemblies, and hath defined the authority and duty of those Officers, and all the essentials and integrals of Church state. As for the circumstantial and accidentals belonging to all the things aforesaid, he hath laid down general Rules for the regulation thereof, the particulars being both needless and impossible to be enumerated and defined.

In this point God hath declared his mind, *Deut.* 4. 2. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it. *Deut.* 12. 32. What soever thing I command you, observe to do it, Thou shalt not add thereto nor diminish from it. The prohibition is not meerly of altering the Rule, Gods written Word by addition or diminution, but of doing more or less than the Rule required, as the precept is not of preserving the Rule, but of observing what is commanded in it.

Such human institutions in Divine Worship, as be in meer subserviency to Divine institutions, for the necessary and convenient modifying and ordering thereof, are not properly additions to Gods commandments. For they

they are of things which are not of the same nature, end and use with the things which God hath commanded, but of meer circumstantial and accidentals belonging to those things. And these circumstantial are in *genera* necessary to the performance of Divine Institutions, and are generally commanded in the Word, though not in particular, but are to be determined in *specie* by those to whom the power of such determination belongs.

They that assert and stand to this only Rule, provide best for the Unity of Religion, and the Peace of the Church. For they are ready to reject whatsoever they find contrary to this Rule, they are more easily kept within the bounds of acceptable Worship, and all warrantable obedience, they lay the greatest weight on things of the greatest worth and moment, they carefully regard all Divine institutions and whatsoever God hath commanded, and they maintain Love, and Peace, and mutual forbearance towards one another in the more inconsiderable diversities of Opinion and Practice.

Those things that are left to human determination, the Pastors, Bishops or Elders, did anciently determine for their own particular Churches. And indeed it is very reasonable and naturally convenient, that they who are the Administrators of Divine institutions, and have the conduct of the People in Divine Worship, and know best what is most expedient

dient for their own Society, should be intrusted with the determination of necessary circumstances within their own Sphere. But forasmuch as the Supream Magistrate is intrusted of God with the care of Religion within his Dominions, and hath a Civil Supremacy in Ecclesiastical affairs, and a great concern in the orderly management of publick Assemblies, he is authorized of God to oversee the determinations and actings of Ecclesiastical Persons, and may assume to himself the determination of the aforesaid circumstantial for the honour of God, the Churches edification and the publick Peace, keeping within the general rules prescribed in Gods Word.

For the maintaining of Church-Unity, that is according to Gods word, it is the part of Subjects to submit to what their Governours have determined, so far as their submission is allowable by the said rule; and it is the part of Governours to consider well the warrantableness of their determinations. More especially their wisdom and care is much required in settling the right bounds of Unity. In this regard the terms of admission to the Communion and Ministry of the Church must be no other, than what the declared will of God hath made the terms of those privileges, and which will shut out none, whom God hath qualified for and called to the same. The setting of other boundaries, besides the

iniquity thereof, will inevitably cause divisions.

The Apostles, Elders and Brethren assembled at *Jerusalem*, *Acts* 15. 28. writing to the believing Gentiles declare, *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.*

- .. From which it is evidently inferred that the burden of things unnecessary ought not to be laid on the Churches.

The things enjoined by that Assembly were antecedently to their Decree, either necessary in themselves or in their consequents according to the state of things in those times and places.

- .. And whatsoever is made the matter of a strict injunction, especially a condition of Church Communion and Priviledges, ought to have some kind of necessity in it antecedent to its imposition. Symbolical Rites or Ceremonies instituted by man to signify Grace or Duty, are none of those things, which being necessary in general, are left to human determination for this or that kind thereof. They have no necessary Subserviency to Divine institutions, they are no parts of that necessary decency and order in Divine Worship, without which the Service would be undecent. And indeed they are not necessary to be instituted or rigidly urged in any time or place whatsoever. The being and well being of any rightly constituted Church of Christ, may stand without them.

St. Paul

St. Paul resolves upon the cases of using or refusing of meats, and the observance or non-observance of days, which God had neither commanded nor forbidden, and of eating of those meats which had been offered in Sacrifice to Idols, *Rom. 14.* and *1 Cor. 8.* *That no man put a stumbling block, or an occasion to fall in his Brothers way.* The Command here given, extends to Pastors and Governours as well as to other Christians, and is to be observed in acts of Governments as well as in other acts. St. Paul was a Church Governour and of high authority, yet he would not use his own liberty in eating Flesh, much less would he impose in things unnecessary to make his Brother to offend.

In the cases aforementioned, there was a greater appearance of reason for despising, censuring or offending others, than there can be for some impositions now in question among us, *viz.* on the one side a fear of partaking in Idolatry, or of eating meats that God had forbidden, or of neglecting days that God had commanded, as they thought; on the other side a fear of being driven from the Christian Liberty, and of restoring the Ceremonial Law. Nevertheless, the Apostle gives a severe charge against censuring, despising or offending others of different Persuasions in those cases. And if it were a Sin to censure or despise one another, much more is

it a Sin to shut out of the Communion or Ministry of the Church for such matters.

The word of God, which is the Rule of Church-Unity, evidently shews that the unity of external order must always be Subservient to Faith and Holiness, and may be required no further than is consistent with the Churches Peace and Edification.

The Churches true Interest lies in the increase of regenerate Christians, who are her true and living Members, and in their mutual love, peace and concord, in receiving one another upon those terms which Christ hath made the bond of this Union. The true Church Unity is comprized by the Apostle in these following Unities; One Body, one Spirit, one Hope, One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God. But there is nothing said of one ritual or set Form of Sacred Offices, one policy or model of Rules and Orders, that are but circumstantial and accidental in a Church state and very various and alterable, while the Church abides the same.

C H A P. III.

Of Schism truly so called.

HERE I lay down general positions about Schism without making application thereof;

thereof ; Whether these positions be right or wrong Gods Word will shew ; and who are, or are not concerned in them, the state of things will shew. Schism is a violation of the Unity of the Spirit, or of that Church-Unity which is of Gods making or approving. This Definition I ground on the aforecited Text, *Mark them that cause Divisions and Offences contrary to the Doctrine that ye have learned.*

Separation and Schism are not of equal extent. There may be a Separation or Secession where there is no Schism. For Schism is always a Sin, but Separation may be a Duty, as the Separation of the Protestants from the Church of *Rome*. Moreover, there may be Schism where there is no Separation. The violation of Unity or the causing of Divisions may be not only by withdrawing, but by any causing of others to withdraw from the Communion of the Church, or by the undue casting or keeping of others out of the Church, or by making of any breaches in Religion contrary to the Unity of the Spirit.

By looking back to the nature, and rule, and requisites of true Church-Unity, we shall understand the true nature and the several kinds and degrees of Schism.

As holy love is the life and Soul of Church-Unity, so that averſation and opposition which is contrary to love, is that which animates

the sin of Schism, and is as it were the heart root of it. Whosoever maintains love, and makes no breach therein, and whose dissenting or withdrawing from a Church is no other than what may stand with love in its extent, is no Schismatick.

The Unity of the Spirit being primarily that of the Church as mystically, the breach thereof lies primarily in being destitute of the Spirit and Life Spiritual, much more in being opposite thereunto, under the shew of Christianity; also in the languishing or lessening of Spiritual Life, especially of the acts of holy love.

The Unity of the Spirit being secondarily, that of the Church as visible in its external state, and the first and chiefest point thereof being in the essentials and weighty matters of Christian Faith and Life; the highest violation thereof and the chiefest point of Schism, lies in denying or enormously violating the said essentials or weighty matters. And it is directly a violation of the Unity of the Catholick Church, and not of particular Churches only.

Not only particular Persons, but Churches, yea a large combination of Churches bearing the Christian name, may in their Doctrine, Worship and other avowed Practice, greatly violate the essentials, or very weighty matters of Christian Faith and Life, and be found guilty

guilty of the most enormous breach of Unity.

It is no Schism to withdraw or depart from any the largest combination or collective body of Churches, (though for their amplitude they presume to stile their combination the Catholick Church) that maintain and avow any Doctrine or Practice, which directly, or by near and palpable consequence overthrows the said essentials.

The next point of external Unity being about the essentials and integrals of Church state, the Sacraments and other publick Worship, the Ministry and Discipline of the Church considered as of Christs institution, the next chief point of Schism is the breach hereof. And this may be either against the Catholick, or a particular Church.

Of such Schism against the state of the Catholick Church, there are these instances.

1. When any one part of professed Christians how numerous soever, combined by any other terms of Catholick Unity, than what Christ hath made, account themselves the only Catholick Church, excluding all Persons and Churches that are not of their combination.

2. When a false Catholick Unity is devised or contended for, *viz.* a devised Unity of Government for the Catholick Church under one terrene Head, personal or collective, assuming a proper governing power over all

Christians upon the face of the whole Earth.

3. When there is an utter disowning of most of the true visible Churches in the World, as having no true Church state, no not the essentials thereof, and an utter breaking off from communion with them accordingly.

•• Of Schism against a particular Church in point of its Church state, there be these instances.

1. The renouncing of a true Church as no Church, although it be much corrupted, much more if it be a purer Church, though somewhat faulty.

2. An utter refusing of all acts of communion with a true Church when we may have communion with it, either in whole or in part, without our personal sin of commission or omission.

3. The causing of any Divisions or Distempers in the state or frame of a true Church contrary to the Unity of the Spirit.

• But it is no Schism to disown a corrupt frame of Polity, supervenient to the essentials and integrals of Church state in any particular Church or combination of Churches, like a leprosie in the Body, that doth grossly deprave them, and in great part frustrate the ends of their constitution.

•• The last and lowest point of external Unity lying in the accidental modes of Religion, and matters of meer order, extrinsick to the
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essentials and integrals of Church-State, the violation thereof is the least and lowest point of Schism, I mean in it self considered, and not in such aggravating circumstances as it may be in.

Those accidental Forms and Orders of Religion, which are necessary in *genere* but left in *specie* to human determination, are allowed of God, when they are determined according to prudence, and charity for Peace and Edification, and accordingly they are to be submitted to. Consequently it is one point of Schism to make a Division from or in a Church upon the account of accident Forms and Orders so determined according to Gods allowance.

But if any of the accidentals be unlawfull, .. and the maintaining or practicing thereof be imposed upon us as the terms of our communion, it is no Schism but Duty to abstain from communion in that case. For explicitly and personally to own errors and corruptions even in smaller points is evil in it self, which must not be committed that good may come. In .. this case not he that withdraws, but he that imposes causeth the Division. And this holds .. of things sinfull either in themselves, or by just consequence.

And herein he that is to act, is to discern and judge for his own practice, whether the things imposed be such. For Gods Law supposeth
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us rational creatures able to discern its meaning, and to apply it for the regulating of our own actions ; else the Law were given us in vain. Submission and reverence towards Superiors obligeth no man to resign his understanding to their determinations, or in compliance with them to violate his own conscience.

“ Persons meek, humble, peaceable and thoroughly conscientious and of competent judgment, may not be able by their diligent and impartial search to see the lawfulness of things enjoined, and tis a hard case if they should thereupon be declared contumacious.

“ Seeing there be several points of Unity, the valuation whereof is to be made according to their different value, mens judgment and estimation of Unity and Schism, is very preposterous, who lay the greatest stress on those points that are of least moment, and raise things of the lowest rank to the highest in their valuation, and set light by things of the greatest moment and highest value ; as indeed they do, who set light by soundness of Faith and holiness of Life, and conscientious observance of Divine institutions, where there is not also unanimity and uniformity in unscriptural Doctrines and human ceremonies. And they that make such an estimate of things, and deal with Ministers accordingly, do therein little advance the Unity of the Spirit, or endeavour to keep it in the bond of Peace.

See-

Seeing the word of God is the rule of Church Unity, a breach is made upon it, when other bounds thereof are set than this rule allows. An instance hereof is the devising of other terms of Church-communion, and Ministerial liberty, than God hath commanded, or allowed in his Word to be made the terms thereof; Also any casting or keeping out of the Church or Ministry such as Gods Word doth not exclude from either, but signifies to be qualified and called thereunto.

God doth not allow on the part of the Imposer such tearms of Church communion or Ministerial station, as are neither Scriptural nor necessary to Peace and Edification, nor are any part of that necessary order and decency, without which the Service of God would be undecent, nor are in any regard so necessary, but that they may be dispensed with for a greater benefit, and the avoiding of a greater mischief. And they are found guilty of Schism that urge such unscriptural and unnecessary things unto a breach in the Church. Such Imposers are not only an occasion of the breach that follows, but a culpable cause thereof, because they impose without and against Christs warrant, who will not have his Church to be burdened, nor the consciences of his Servants intangled with things unnecessary.

Nevertheless, such unscriptural or unnecessary things, if they be not in themselves

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unlawfull nor of milchievous consequence, may be of Gods allowing as to the submitters.

• Thereupon they are guilty of Schism, who meerly for the sake of those unnecessary things yet lawfull as to their use, though wrongfully urged upon them, forsake the communion of the Church or their Ministerial station, where things are well settled as to the substantials of Religion, and the ends of Church order, and when they themselves are not required to justify the imposing of such unnecessaries.

• Here I speak of contumacious refusers, who will rather make a breach than yield. But
• refusers out of conscience believing, or with appearance of reason suspecting the said lawfull things to be unlawfull, are either acquitted from Schism, or guilty but in a low degree, and much less culpable than the Imposers, who might well forbear to impose.

• Be it here noted that when Superiors sin in
• commanding a thing exempt from their authority, it may be the Subjects duty to observe the thing commanded. In this case the said observance is not an act of obedience, for that can arise only from the Rulers authority to command. But it is an act of prudence, equity and charity, and it is good and necessary for the ends sake, and in that regard tis an act of obedience, though not to the Earthly Ruler, yet to God who commands us to follow Peace and maintain Unity in all lawfull ways and means.

In

In the judgment of the Apostle it is no slight matter to act against conscience rationally doubting, or suspecting a breach of Gods Law, *Rom. 14. 5. Let every man be fully persuaded in his mind, v. 14. To him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean, ver. 23. He that doubteth, is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of Faith, for whatsoever is not of Faith is sin.* The command of Rulers is no good security for acting against a rational doubting conscience. When I am in doubt touching the lawfulness of the thing enjoined, I have no certainty of being on the safer side, by complying with Rulers. For though in general obedience to Rulers be a certain Duty, yet in the particular doubted case, I cannot be certain that my compliance is right and warrantable obedience, and not a breach of Gods Law. Is it plain that I ought to obey the commands of Rulers in things that have Gods allowance? so tis as plain that I ought not to obey their commands in things which God hath forbidden. Moreover, it is as plain that I ought not to act against my own conscience, which as being the discerners of the will of God concerning me, is of right the immediate director of my actions. Indeed my conscience cannot alter Gods Law, or make that which God hath made my duty to be not
my

my duty, yet it will not suffer me to act in disconformity to its directions.

- Seeing the Unity of the Spirit is always in conjunction with Faith and Holiness, to which the Unity of external order is always to be subservient, it follows that when Unity of external order doth not tend to advance but hinder sound Faith and true Holiness, then a false Unity is set up, and the true Unity is abandoned, and divisions and offences are caused. And it is no Schism but a duty not to adhere to a Unity of external order so set and urged, as that it tends to the destruction or notable detriment of Faith and Holiness, which are the end of all Church Order. The means are good in reference to their end, and must never be used in a way destructive to
- it. Of the hinderance of the said ends, there be these following instances.

Here laid down in general, without intendment of particular application to any Churches now in being, which are left to be tryed and judged by that rule by which all must stand or fall.

1. When a Church or Churches, a Congregation or Congregations have an establishment of external Polity, and an ordained Ministry, and a Form of Divine Worship, but are destitute of such Ministers as are qualified to feed the Flock, and are burdened with such

as are altogether unfit to have the charge of Souls committed to them, who are either unable to teach, or teach corruptly, either teaching corrupt Doctrine, or abusing, mishandling and misapplying sound Doctrine, to encourage the Ungodly and discourage the Godly.

2. Where there are some Ministers able and apt to teach and duly qualified ; but their number is in no wise proportionable to the number of the People, and there be multitudes that cannot have the benefit of their Ministry, so that if they have no more placed among them than those few, they have in effect none.

3. Where sincere Christians, or credible Professors of Christianity are cast out of an established Church by wrong sentence, or are debarred from its communion by unlawfull terms enjoined them, or unnecessary terms which are to them unlawfull by real doubts of conscience, and which Christ hath not authorized Rulers to injoyne as terms of Church communion.

4. When Ministers, whom Christ hath furnished and called, are driven out of their publick station by unlawfull terms enjoined, or by terms unnecessary and to them unlawfull by real doubts of conscience, and which Christ hath not authorized Rulers to injoyne as terms of the publick Ministry.

Upon

Upon the cases here mentioned, I inquire whether the said Ministers and People may not draw together into new congregations. Let it be considered whether the determinations of men may be a perpetual bar to true visible Christians, (it may be to multitudes of them) against the enjoyment of those most important priviledges, to which God hath given them right. Yea, suppose their consciences were culpably weak in scrupling things imposed, yet they may suffer wrong by such an excess of punishment, as so great a deprivation. And Christ doth not reject them for such weaknesses.

Let it be also considered, whether such injured as Christians are wrongfully excluded from Gods Ordinances, and such neglected Souls as are left destitute of the necessary means of Salvation, may lawfully be deserted by Christs Ministers. Should not the Stewards of the mysteries of God endeavour to supply what is lacking to such by reason of the rigourousness or negligence of others? If it be said, we may not do evil that good may come, nor break the laws of Unity for such respects, the answer is, that this is not to do evil, but a good work and a necessary duty, and here is no breach of Unity that is of Gods making or allowing. The necessary means of saving Souls are incomparably more pretious than unifor-

uniformity in external, accidental order, especially when tis unwarrantably injoyed, and attended with such evil consequents. If within any local bounds assigned for the Pastoral charge of any Ecclesiastick, the People be left destitute of competent provision for their Souls, it is no intrusion or breach of Unity if an other Pastor perform the work of the Ministry within those bounds.

Subjects may not by coercive power reform the publick State and change the Laws, which is the work of the Supream Magistrate. But let it be considered whether they may not have their voluntary Assemblies for Gods Worship, when they are driven from the communion of the legal Churches by the imposition of unlawfull terms, or unnecessary terms apprehended by them to be unlawfull. For in this case they are forced either to hold such Assemblies, or to abide perpetually without those Spiritual priviledges which are their due, and the ordinary means of their Salvation.

There is a great difference between inimical Separation, like Sedition in a Commonwealth, and Secregation upon necessary causes without breach of charity. And among the necessary causes this may be one, that all sober Christians, who for conscience sake cannot submit to the way of the Established Churches, may be relieved; and that none may be exposed

posed for lack of that relief to be lead aside into the error of the wicked, as Heresie, Infidelity, or any other course of Impiety. Indeed here is some variation from the ordinarily regular bounding of Churches. But the partition of one Church from another by local bounds, is not of absolute necessity and invariable, but naturally eligible from the convenience thereof, when it may be had. But the state of some Christians may be such, as to compel them to vary from it. The scope hereof is not to set up Churches against Churches, but either occasional and temporary Assemblies, or at the most but divers Churches distinguished by their several places of assembling, or by diversity of external order, as the allowed Congregations of Foreigners in *London*, are distinguished from the Parish Churches.

- If any object the inconveniencies that may follow the permitting of Church Assemblies besides those of the Established Order, the answer is, That the wisdom and clemency of Rulers in any Nation where this case may be supposed can provide, that as few as may be should stand in need of that permission, by fixing the terms of Church communion and Ministerial liberty to such a latitude, as may comprehend all the more moderate Dissenters.
- And after such comprehension, Christian charity

city will plead, that all tolerable Dissenters (that is, all who believe and live as Christians) may be tolerated within such limits, as may stand with publick Peace and safety. That which is here proposed, may make for the relief of many thousand serious Christians without breach of the external order, which is necessary to be maintained, and is not set up to the hinderance of things more necessary.

It is to be noted that the offenders expressly marked out by the Apostle in the Text, *Rom.* 16. 17. were ungodly men that opposed or perverted the Christian Doctrine, and being Sensualists and deceivers disturbed and polluted the Christian Societies, and seduced the simple into destructive error and practice. Wherefore the Text is ill applied to the rigorous condemnation of honest and peaceable men, that dissent only in some accidental or inferior points of Religion, for which the Apostle forbids Christians to despise or judge one another. Yet not only false Teachers, but all Schismaticks are here condemned under this description, *viz.* those that cause Divisions and Offences. And though they be not direct opposers of sound Doctrine, yet being Dividers or Disturbers, they practice contrary to the Doctrine of Christ, which teacheth Unity, Love and Peace. But still it must be observed that the reality of Schism lies not in being di-

vided or disordered, but in causing the division or disturbance, or in a voluntary violation of or departing from true Church-Unity.

They that cause Divisions are not excused from Schism by the support of Secular Power, nor are others convicted of it meerly by the want of that Support. The Magistrates power in Sacred things is accumulative, not destructive or diminutive to the rights of Christs Ministers and People. It takes not from them any thing that Christ hath granted them, but gives them a better capacity to make use thereof.

C H A P. IV.

Of the Schisms that were in the more ancient times of the Church; and the different case of the Nonconformists in these times.

OF those parties which were anciently reputed Schismaticks, as violating the Unity of the Church, yet not Hereticks, as denying any Fundamental point of the Christian Faith, the *Novatians* and *Donatists* are of the chiefeft note. Forasmuch as both these are looked upon as the greatest instances of Schism, it may be requisite for me to consider the

the true state of their separation from the main body of the Christian Church, passing by accidental matters, and insisting on the merits of their cause according to their main Principles and Practices.

As concerning the Donatists, the breach made by them had this rise. *Donatus* with his Complices vehemently opposed *Cecilianus*, who had been chosen Bishop of *Carthage*, in design to thrust him out of his Bishoprick. They accuse him of being ordained by one that had been a Proditor, and of having admitted into Ecclesiastical Office one that was guilty of the like fault. This Cause was by the Emperor *Constantine's* appointment heard before several Councils and many Judges. The Accusers still fail in their Proofs of the things objected, *Cecilianus* is acquitted and confirmed in his Office. The Party of *Donatus* failing in their design, were carried in a boundless rage of opposition to a total, and irreclaimable Separation from all the Churches that were not of their Faction, and became very numerous upon a pretence of shunning the contagion of the wicked in the Communion of the Sacraments. Their principles were, that the Church of Christ was no where to be found but among themselves in a corner of *Africa*; also that true Baptism was not Administred but in their Sect. Likewise they

proceeded to great tumult, and violence, and rapine. And a sort of them called *Circumcelliones* gloried in a furious kind of Martyrdom, partly by forcing others to kill them, and partly by killing themselves.

The *Novatians* took their name and beginning from *Novatus* a Presbyter, first at *Carthage*, afterwards at *Rome*, who held that they who lapsed in times of Persecution unto the denying of Christ, were not to be readmitted unto the Communion of the Church, though they repented and submitted to the Ecclesiastical Discipline of Penance. He separated from the *Roman Church*, and was made a Bishop by Bishops of his own judgment, in opposition to *Cornelius* Bishop of *Rome*. *Cyprian* gives a very bad character of him, as a turbulent, arrogant and avaritious Person. But of what Spirit soever he was, his Judgment and Canon was received among many that were of stricter lives; and he himself is reported to have suffered death in the persecution under *Valerian*.

At the Council of *Nice*, *Acecius* Bishop of the *Novatians* being asked by *Constantine*, whether he assented to the same Faith with the Council, and to the observation of *Easter* as was there derceed, answered that he fully assented to both. Then being again asked by the Emperor, why he separated from the

Communion

Communion, he recited for himself things done in the Reign of *Decius*, and the exquisite observation of a certain severe Canon, that they who after Baptism had fallen into that kind of sin, which the Scripture calls a sin unto death, ought not to be partakers of the Divine mysteries; but to be exhorted to repentance, and to expect the hope of remission not from the Priest but from God, who hath power to forgive. By this it appears that the *Novatians* did not deny the Salvability of the lapsed, or others that had fallen into a sin unto death, but only refused to admit them to Sacerdotal Absolution and Church-Communion. And thus they made a very unwarrantable separation, grounded upon an unjust rigor of very bad consequence.

Nevertheless their error was no other, than what holy and good men might be ensnared in by the appearance of a greater detestation of sin, and its tendency to prevent the lapse of Christians into Idolatry, and to make them more resolved for Martyrdom. And by as credible History as any we have of the ancient times, they are reported to have had among them men eminently Pious, and some famous for Miracles. They unmovably adhered to the *Homousian* Faith, and for the maintenance of it together with the Orthodox, suffered dreadfull Persecutions. They had

some Bishops remarkable for Wisdom and Godliness, and such as were consulted with by some of the chief of the Catholick Bishops, and that with good success for support of the Common Faith against the *Arrians* and such like Hereticks. Under a certain Persecution, wherein they were Companions of the self same suffering, it is said that the *Catholicks* and *Novatians* had Prayers together in the *Novations* Churches, and that in those times they were almost united, if the *Novations* had not utterly refused that they might keep up their old institutes; yet they bare such good will one to another, that they would die one for another. These and many other things of like nature are reported of them by *Socrates*, whom some indeed suspect to have been addicted to them, yet upon no other ground, but because he gives them their due upon evident proof. And besides what he hath reported, *Sosomen* thus testifies of them, *L. 2. C. 30. That when other Sects expired, the Novatians because they had good men for the Leaders of their way, and because they defended the same Doctrine with the Catholick Church, were very numerous from the beginning, and so continued, and suffered not much damage by Constantines Law for suppressing of Sects; And Acesius their Bishop being much favoured by the Emperor, for the integrity of his life*
greatly

greatly advantaged his Church. Also *L. 4. C. 19.* He reports the great amity that was between them and the Catholicks in a time of common Persecution:

Whether the case of the Dissenters from the Uniformity now required, be in point of Schism of the same or like reason with the above mentioned, or any other anciently reputed Schismatics, is now to be considered. And it is the case of those that dissent not in the substance of Religion, but only in things pertaining to the Ecclesiastical Polity or external Order in the Church, that is here taken into consideration. Of these, some being persuaded of the necessity of their own Church-Order, desire to remain as they are in their severed Societies; yet they do not nullify the legal Churches or Ministry, or the dispensation of the Word, Sacraments and Prayer therein performed. Others being satisfied in the constitution of Parochial Churches, and in the substance of the Established Form of Worship, would gladly embrace a freedom of Communicating and Administering therein, upon the removal of some bars that lie against them, and which they think may well be removed. Thereupon they seek an Accommodation and Union by a sufficient comprehensiveness in the publick constitution; and withall a reasonable indulgence towards those

those Brethren, who for the straightness of their judgments cannot be comprehended.

Neither Party of the Dissenters here described can be charged with any thing like the *Donatistical* fury before expressed. If *Austin* sought the suppression of that Sect by the secular power, in regard of the horrible outrages committed by them, it cannot reasonably be urged for a precedent (as it hath been by some) for the suppression of men Sober and Peaceable, and found in the main points of Christian Faith and Life. Nor can either Party of us be charged with that intolerable presumption and arrogance of the Donatists, in confining the Flock of Christ to their own Party, or the disannulling and utter denouncing of all Churches besides
 • their own. Nor is the ground of our dissatisfaction like theirs, which began in a quarrel against a particular Bishop, and was maintained by animosity against those that would not condemn him. It is well known that another manner of account is to be given of our Dissents.

If it be objected, that those Dissenters whose principles bind them up to persevere in their severed Societies, seem in this respect to be as the *Novatians*, who would not admit a re-Union with the other Churches; it may be answered for them, that reasons
 have

have been offered in the foregoing parts of this Discourse for indulgence to conscientious People, who are intangled by the narrowness of their principles touching Church-Order. Besides, they do not stand off upon so harsh and rigorous a point as the *Novatians* did, *viz.* The utter repelling of the lapsed, though penitent from the Communion of the Church. And they have ordinarily communion in the Word and Prayer with Congregations that are not of their Church way, and occasionally in the Sacrament with those Congregations, where they apprehend a care of the exercise of Discipline. Nor may they be judged so irreconcilable to the Established Order, but that the holy lives of those in the publick Ministry, and their lively Preaching, and a greater care of true and real Church-Discipline, might do much to their recovery.

In the mean time, why may not these be upon as good terms under the present Government, as the *Novatians* were under the Government of their times? Church History reports that they were cruelly Persecuted by the *Arrian* Emperours and Bishops, and that they had great indulgence under Orthodox Emperours, and with many Catholick Bishops and Patriarchs, whose prudent and moderate Government did best provide for the

the Peace of their Churches. But those Orthodox Bishops, who took from them their Churches and Estates, were chiefly either such as took to themselves a Secular Power, and ruled imperiously and with violence, or such as with their zeal had more of wrath and rashness than of meekness and prudence. This can be easily proved in the particular instances, if need were.

But this is not the case of all *Nonconformists*. For part of them (and upon good experiment made, they may be found the greater part) do not seek to abide in a severed State, but desire a Union. It is well known they are as sensible of the evil of Schism, and as Studious of the Churches Peace and Concord, as any others. And though they have not the same latitude of judgment with others in some points, yet they have a right Catholick Spirit to promote the common Interest of Religion, and more especially the Protestant Reformation, and dread the weakning and shattering of it by needless Divisions, and are ready to go as far as conscience will allow in compliance with the injunctions of Rulers. But they are cast and kept out of the Established Order by the injunction of some terms, which in regard of their present judgment, they can not comply with, but under the guilt of so great

great a sin as dissembling in the matter of Religion.

Touching Church-Government, they admit •• the Episcopacy that was of ancient Ecclesiastical custom in the time of *Ignatius*, yea, or of *Cyprian*. Bishop *Usher's* model of Govern- •• ment by Bishops and Arch-bishops with their Presbyters, was by some of them presented to the Kings Majesty for a ground-work of Accommodation. They acknowledge the Kings Ecclesiastical Supremacy according to the Oath in that case required. His Majesty in •• his gracious Declaration concerning Ecclesiastical Affairs, gives a Testimony concerning the Ministers that attended him in *Holland*, in these words, *viz. To our great satisfaction and comfort, We found them Persons full of affection to Us, and of zeal to the Peace of Church and State, and neither Enemies (as they had been given out to be) to Episcopacy or Liturgy, but modestly to desire such alterations in either, as without shaking foundations might best allay the present Distempers.*

They are ready to engage that they will not disturb the Peace of the Church, nor endeavour any point of alteration in its Government by Rebellious Seditions, or any unlawfull ways. Those points of Confor- •• mity wherein they are dissatisfied, are but some accidentals of Religion and external modes,

modes, and the Declarations and Subscriptions importing an allowance of all and every thing contained in the Liturgy. And they think that these points are not so necessary in themselves or in their consequents; but they are very dispensable as the Wisdom of Governours shall see cause.

.. If it be objected, that if any thing should be yielded to them, there would be no end of their cravings, that which I have to say is, That reasonable men will be satisfied with reasonable concessions; and if Subjects know not what is fit for them to ask, Governours .. know what is fit for them to give. By granting the desired relaxation, the Church would not (as some alledge) be self-condemned, as confessing the unlawfulness of her injunctions, or as justifying the Opinions .. of the Dissenters. For it can signifie from her no more than either her indulgence to the weak, or her moderation in things less necessary and more controverted, which would not turn to her reproach, but to her greater justification.

I have here nothing to say to them that object against any relaxation after that manner, as if they desired not our Conformity .. but our perpetual exclusion. Such may be answered in due season. And I have here nothing to do with those that argue against

us from Politick considerations, respecting a particular Interest too narrow for an adequate foundation of Church-Peace and Christian-Concord. But my scope is to consider what may be done by the Higher Powers and Church Guides for the healing of breaches, according to the Wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easie to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisie.

I have made particular observation of those too most remarkable Parties, which have been looked upon as the chief instances of Schism in the more ancient times. The other Schisms that I find of any remark in those times were raised, sometimes by Persons cast out of the Church for their Crimes, and thereupon drawing Disciples after them, as was that of *Meletius* a Bishop in *Egypt*, who was desposed for having sacrificed to Idols. Sometimes by offence unjustly taken at some supposed faultiness in a Bishop, as was that of an Orthodox Party in *Antioch*, against another *Meletius*, an Orthodox and right worthy Bishop of that City, only because he was at first brought in by the *Arrians*; sometimes by the exasperations of the People for injuries done
to

to them or their Pastors, and outrages committed by their opposites, as was that of the *Johannites* at *Constantinople* upon the banishment of *Chrysostom*; and sometimes by meer animosity and humor of discontentment, as was that of *Lucifer* a Bishop in *Sardinia*, who separated from *Eusebius* Bishop of *Ver-tellis* and others, because they disliked his rash act of Ordaining *Paulinus* to be Bishop of *Antioch*, as tending to perpetuate the Schism there begun.

Touching all the said Parties, it may be observed that they did not plead that any Opinions or Forms were imposed on them, to which their consciences did reluctate, nor did they desire others forbearance towards them in such things as might bear too hard upon them; but they themselves would not bear with others in that which they supposed faulty, but did rather choose wholly to abandon the Communion of the Churches, and did not seek nor care for accommodation with them. But this is not the case of at least a great part of the Dissenters of these times. For they importune an accommodation with the Churches of the Established Order, and for Peace sake, are willing to bear with the practice of others in that which themselves dislike or doubt of; but they cannot obtain

obtain a Dispensation from others, in some things which are very dispensable points according to their judgment, but are forced to abide in a severed state, unless they will profess what they believe not, or practice what they allow not.

Now because the judgment and practice of antiquity is much insisted on, I pray that it may be considered, whether in the Primitive, or ancient times of Christianity, men, yea, many hundreds of men duly qualified for the Ministry by sound Faith and good Life, as also by their Learning and Industry, and offering all reasonable security for their submissive and peaceable demeanure, were or would have been cast and kept out of the Church for their Nonconformity to some Opinions, Forms and Ceremonies, which at the best are but the accidentals of Religion, and of the truth or lawfulness whereof, the Dissenters were wholly dissatisfied, and which the Imposers judged to be but things in themselves indifferent. V

And I further pray that it may be considered, whether it be easier for the Nonconformists to be self-condemned in Conforming to some injunctions against their consciences, and in deserting the Ministry to
E which

which they are dedicated, than for Superiours either by some relaxation to make them capable of Conforming, or to bear with their peaceable exercise of the Ministry in a state of Nonconformity, while some of their injunctions confine them to that state.

CHAP.

C H A P. V.

Of making a right estimate of the guilt of Schism, and something more of taking the right way to Unity.

THe confused noise about Schism, and the unjust imputation thereof, that is commonly made, hath greatly disordered the minds of many. Some have been thereby swaid to an absolute compliance with the most numerous or the most prevailing Parties. Others discerning the abuse of this name, but forgetting that there is something truly so called, have made light of the thing it self, which is indeed of a heinous nature. I have been engaged in this Disquisition by a deep sense of the evil of Schism, and an earnest care of keeping my self from the real guilt thereof, and what is here written, I willingly submit to a grave and just examination. *Errare possum, Hæreticus, Schismaticus esse nolo.* I am liable to Errour as others are, but I am sure I am no wilfull Schismatick.

It is commonly given to men to pass a

severe judgment upon every dissent from their own Opinions and Orders. Whereupon, as that hath had the character of Schism stamped upon it, which is not such indeed; so that which is Schism in a low and tolerable degree, hath been aggravated to the highest, and prosecuted against all rules of prudence and charity.

To make an equal judgment of the guilt of Schism in Persons or Parties, the degree of the Schism is duly to be considered. Our Saviour teacheth that reviling language, contemptuous words and rash anger, are breaches of the Sixth Commandment, yet in degree of guilt, they are vastly different from the act of wilfull Murder. And indeed in the kind of delinquency here treated of, there are as great differences of degrees as of any other kind. The case of those that are necessitated to a non-compliance in some lawfull things by them held unlawfull, yet seeking union would gladly embrace a reasonable accomodation, is much different from theirs, who upon choice and wilfully sever themselves, because they love to be severed. In like manner the case of those who desire and seek the conformity of others, and would gladly have fellowship with them, yet through misguided zeal, are approvers of such unneccessary

ry impositions as hinder the conforming of many, is much different from theirs, who designing the extrusion of others, contrive the intangling of them by needless rigors. Many other instances might be given to express the great disparity of cases in point of Schism, all which may teach us in the estimate that we are to make thereof, to put a difference between honest minds, that by mistake are drawn into Division, and those that out of their corrupt minds and evill designs do wilfully cause Division.

In many things we offend all, and therefore it behoves us to consider one another, as subject to the like errors and passions. We should not judge too severely, as we would not be so judged. There be many examples of Schismatical animosities and perversnesses, into which in the ancient times such Persons have fallen, as were otherwise worthily esteemed in the Church. *Cyril* with the greater number of Bishops in the *Ephesine* Council, too rashly deposed *John* of *Antioch*, and his Party of Bishops upon a quarrel that arose between them. And *John* with his Adherents returning to *Antioch*, did more rashly depose *Cyril* and his Party, and yet both Parties were Orthodox, and in the issue joyned in the Condemnation of *Nestorius*.

storius, But the most remarkable instance in this kind, is the disorderly and injurious proceeding of so venerable a Person as *Epiphanius*, against so worthy a Person as *Chrysostom*, to which he was stirred up by the instigation of that incendiary *Theophilus* of *Alexandria*. The said *Epiphanius* goes to *Constantinople*, and in the Church without the City held a sacred Communion, and Ordained a Deacon; and when he had entred the City, in a publick Church he read the Decree made by himself and some others in the condemnation of *Origens* Books, and excommunicated *Dioscurus* and his Brethren called the long Monks, worthy and Orthodox men persecuted by the *Anthromorphites*. And all this he did without and against the consent of *Chrysostom* the Bishop of the Place, and in contempt of him. I may further instance in the long continued division between *Paulinus* and *Meletius*, with their Parties at *Antioch*, though both of them were of the *Nicene* Faith; likewise in the long continued Separation made from the Church of *Constantinople*, by the followers of *Chrysostom* after his banishment, because they were exasperated by the injuries done to their worthy Patriarch.

These weaknesses in good men of old times, I observe not to dishonour them, but that

that we may be thereby warned to be more charitable and less censorious towards one another, in case of the like weaknesses and disorders, and to be solicitous to maintain Peace, and to prevent discord among all those that are united in the substantials of Christian Faith and Practice, and for this end to be more carefull in avoiding unreasonable oppositions, unwarrantable impositions, and all causeless exasperations.

True Holiness is the basis of true Unity. For by it the Faithfull cleave to God, and one to another in him and for him, and are inclined to receive one another on those terms, on which God hath received them all. And by it they are turned from that dividing selfishness, which draws men into several or opposite ways according to their several or opposite ends.

Let not a carnal wordly Interest in a Church state, be set up against Holiness and Unity. Let the increase and peace of the Church visible, be sought in order to the increase and peace of the mystical. Let no one Party be lifted up against the common Peace of sound Believers; and let not any part of the legitimate Children of Christs Family be ejected or harassed upon the instigation of others, but let the Stewards in the Family carry it equally, and so gratifie one part in their
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desired

desired Orders, that the other part be not oppressed. Let not them be still vexed, who would be glad of tolerable terms with their Brethren. In Church-Governours let the power of doing good be enlarged, and the power of doing hurt restrained, as much as will stand with the necessary ends of Government.

Let the Discipline of the Church commend it self to the consciences of men. Let the edge of it be turned the right way and its vigor be put forth, not about little formalities but the great and weighty matters of Religion. Zeal in substantials and charitable forbearance in circumstantial, is the way to gain upon the hearts of those that understand the true ends of Church-government, and what it is to be Religious indeed.

Let the occasions of stumbling and snares of division be taken out of the way, and let controverted unnecessaries be left at liberty. Discord will be inevitable, where the terms of concord remain a difficulty insuperable.

The Conscientious that are willing to bid high for Peace, cannot resign their consciences to the wills of men, and humility and soberness doth not oblige them to act contrary to their own judgments out of reverence to their Superiors; they cannot help themselves, but their Superiors may. 'Tis the Spirit of Antichrist that is fierce and violent; but the

Spirit

Spirit of Christ is dovelike, meek and harmless, and that Spirit inclines to deal tenderly with the consciences of Inferiours. Tenderness of conscience is not to be despised or exposed to scorn, because some may falsely pretend to it. The Head of the Church and Saviour of the Body is compassionate towards his Members, and he hath said, *Whoso shall offend one of these little ones, that believe in me, it were better for him that a milstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the Sea.*

As the way of unity lies much in the wisdom, equity and charity of Superiours, so in the humility and due submission of Inferiours, in their ready closing with what is commendable in the publick constitutions, in their bearing with what is tolerable, in making the best improvement of what is therein improvable for their own and others Edification, in a word, in denying no compliance, which piety towards God and charity towards men doth not forbid.

Matters of publick injunction, which Inferiours stick at, may be considered by them either as in themselves unlawfull, or as inexpedient. Now it is not only or chiefly the inexpediency of things commanded, but the supposed unlawfulness of divers of those things that the Nonconformists generally stick at,

- at, whereof they are ready to render a particular account, when it will be admitted.
- Howbeit a question may arise about the warrantableness of submission to things not in themselves unlawfull but inexpedient, especially in respect of scandal, the solution whereof may be requisite for the clearing of our way in such things.

Upon this question it may be noted, That in those cases, wherein there is no right of commanding, there is no due of obedience. Nevertheless, things unwarrantably commanded are sometimes warrantably observed, though not in obedience, yet in prudence, as to procure Peace, and to shew a readiness to all possible compliance with Superiors. Moreover, Rulers have no authority to command that, which in it self is not unlawfull, when Christian charity forbids to do it in the present circumstances by reason of evil consequents. For all authority is given for Edification and not for Destruction. Likewise our Christian liberty includes no Licence to do that act at the command of Rulers, the doing of which in regard of circumstances, is uncharitable. But here it must be considered, how far the law of charity doth extend in this case, and when it doth, or doth not forbid my observance of what the Ruler hath unwarrantably, because uncharitably commanded.

True

True charity doth not wholly destroy Christian Liberty, though it regulates the use thereof; and it doth not extend it so far one way as to destroy it self another way. If I am bound up from doing every indifferent thing, at which weak consciences will take offence, my liberty is turned into bondage, and I am left in thralldom to other mens endless Scrupulosities. This is I think a yoke which Christians are not fit nor able to bear. This bondage is greater and the burden lies heavier upon me, if by reason of others weakness, I must be bound up from observing an indifferent thing at the command of Rulers, and by them made the condition of my liberty for publick Service in the Church, when my conscience is fully satisfied that it is lawfull, and otherwise expedient for me to do it. As for the warrantableness of enjoyning, the Ruler must look to that. Are some displeased and grieved that I do it? As many or more may be displeased and grieved if I do it not. Do some take occasion by my necessary use of a just liberty, to embolden themselves to sin? My forbearing of it may be an occasion of sin to others, as their persisting in some troublesom Errour to their own and others Spiritual damage, and in unwarrantable non-compliance with their Governours. And the loss of my liberty for publick Service consequent to such forbearance, must also be laid in the ballance.

When

- When both the using and forbearing of my liberty is clogged with evil consequents, I know no safer way than duly to consider of what moment the consequents are on either side, and to incline to that which hath the lesser evil. Herein the Wisdom of the prudent is to direct his way upon the impartial view of all circumstances
- .. which come under his prospect. And if good conscience and right reason, guided by the general Rules of Gods Word, lead me to make use of my Christian liberty in compliance with my Superiors, I must humbly and charitably apply my self to remove the offence, that some take, by clearing the lawfulness and expediency of
 - .. my act to their judgments. But if that cannot be discerned by them, I am by my Christian good behaviour to make it evident to their consciences, what in me lies, that what I do, I do sincerely and faithfully, and that I am no temporizer, man-pleaser and self-seeker. I
 - .. humbly conceive that that high saying of the Apostle, *If meat make my Brother to offend, I will eat no Flesh while the World standeth*, doth admit such equitable interpretation, as the circumstances of time, place, person, and the whole state of things declares to be most reasonable.

*A humble representation of my own case
touching the exercise of the Mini-
stery.*

I Have been in the Ministry near forty years, having been ordained Presbyter according to the Form of Ordination used in the Church of England. And being called to this Sacred Order, I hold my self indispensibly obliged to the work thereof, as God enables me and gives me opportunity. The nature of the Office is signified in the Form of Words, by which I was solemnly set apart thereunto. *viz. [Receive the Holy Ghost, whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained: And be thou a faithfull Dispenser of the Word of God and of his holy Sacraments, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.]* The former part of these Words being used by our Saviour to his Apostles, in conferring upon them the Pastoral Authority, fully proves that the Office of a Presbyter is Pastoral, and of the same nature with that which was ordinary in the Apostles, and in which they had Successours.

Like

Likewise, this Church did then appoint that at the ordering of Priests or Presbyters, certain portions of Scripture should be read, as belonging to their Office to instruct them in the nature of it, *viz.* That portion of *Act. 20.* which relates *St. Pauls* sending to *Ephesus*, and calling for the Elders of the Congregation with his exhortation to them, *To take heed to themselves and to all the Flock, over which the Holy Ghost had made them Overseers, to rule the Congregation of God.* Or else *1 Tim. 3.* which sets forth the Office and due qualification of a Bishop. And afterwards the Bishop spake to them that were to receive the Office of Priesthood, in this form of words, (*Ye have heard, brethren, as well in your private examination, and in the exhortation and holy Lessons taken out of the Gospels and Writings of the Apostles, of what dignity, and how great importance this Office is whereto ye are called, that is to say the Messengers, the Watchmen, the PASTORS and Stewards of the Lord, to teach, to premonish, to feed, to provide for the Lords Family.*

I mention my Ordination according to the Episcopal Form, because it is of greatest esteem with them, to whom this Representation is more especially tendred. Nevertheless, I own the validity of Presbyterial Ordination, and judge that Ministers so Ordained,
may

may make the same defence for exercising the Ministry, in the same case that is here represented.

Christ is the Author and the only proper Giver of this Office; and though he give it by the mediation of men, yet not by them as giving the Office, but as instruments of the designation, or of the solemn investiture of the Person to whom he gives it. As the King is the immediate Giver of the power of a Mayor in a Town Corporate, when he gives it by the Mediation of Electors and certain Officers, only as instruments of the designation, or of the solemn investiture of the Person.

I am not conscious of disabling my self to the Sacred Ministrations, that belong to the Office of a Presbyter, by any Opinion or Practice, that may render me unfit for the same. Touching which matter, I humbly offer my self to the tryal of my Superiours to be made according to Gods Word.

Nothing necessary to authorize me to those Ministrations is wanting that I know of. I am Christs Commissioned Officer; and I do not find that he hath revoked the authority which I have received from him; And without the warrant of his Law no man can take it from me. Nor do I find, that the nature of this Office, or the declared will of Christ requires,

requires, that it be exercised no otherwise than in subordination to a Diocesane Bishop.

That I do not exercise the Ministry under the regulation of the Bishop of the Diocess, and in other circumstances according to the present established Order, the cause is not in me, who am ready to submit thereunto; but a bar is laid against me by the injunction of some terms in the lawfulness whereof I am not satisfied, whereof I am ready to give an account when it is required.

I do not understand that I am under any Oath or Promise to exercise the Ministry, no otherwise than in subordination to the Bishop, or the Ordinary of the Place. The promise made at my Ordination to obey my Ordinary and other chief Ministers, to whom the government and charge over me is committed, concerns me only as a Presbyter, standing in relation to the Bishop or Ordinary, as one of the Clergy of the Diocess, or other peculiar Jurisdiction, in which relation I do not now stand, being cast out and made incapable thereof. Moreover, in whatsoever capacity I now stand, the said Promise must be understood either limitedly or without limitation. If limitedly, as in things lawfull and honest, (as I conceive it ought to be understood) then I am not bound by it in the present case. For it is not lawfull nor honest for
me

me to comply with the now enjoyned Conformity against my conscience, or in case of such necessitated non-compliance, to desist from the Ministry that I have received in the Lord. If it be understood without limitation, it is a sinfull promise in the matter thereof, and thereupon void. Absolute and unlimited obedience to man may not be promised. Let it be considered also that the objected promise could not bind me to more than the Conformity then required. But since my Ordination and Promise then made, the state of Conformity hath been much altered by the injunction of more, and to me harder terms, than formerly were enjoyned. When I was Ordained, I thought that the terms then required were such as might be lawfully submitted to. But young men (such as I then was) may be easily drawn to subscribe to things publickly enjoyned, and so become engaged, before they have well considered.

The Ordainer or Ordainers, who designed me to this Office of Christs donation, and not theirs, could not by any act of theirs lessen it as to its nature or essential state. Nor can they derogate from Christs authority over me, and the obligation which he hath laid upon me, to discharge the Office with which he hath intrusted me.

That a necessity is laid upon me in my pre-

sent state to preach the Gospel, I am fully perswaded, in regard of the necessities of Souls, which cry aloud for all the help that can possibly be given by Christs Ministers, whether Conformists or Nonconformists. The necessary means of their Salvation is more valuable, than meer external Order or Uniformity in things accidental.

I receive the whole Doctrine of Faith and Sacraments, according to the Articles of the Church of *England*, and am ready to subscribe the same. I have joyned, and still am ready to joyn with the legally established Churches in their publick Worship. The matter of my sacred Ministrations hath been always consonant to the Doctrine of the Reformed Churches, and particularly of the Church of *England*. I meddle not with our present differences, but insist on the great and necessary points of Christian Religion. I design not the promoting of a severed Party, but of meer Christianity or Godliness.

I am willing to comply with the will of my Superiors as far as is possible with a safe conscience, and to return to my Ministerial station in the Established Churches, may I be but dispensed with in the injunctions, with which my conscience, till I be otherwise informed, forbids me to comply. In the whole of my dissent from the said injunctions, I can
not

not be charged with denying any thing essential to Christian Faith and Life, or to the constitution of a Church, or any of the weightier matters of Religion, or with being in any thing inconsistent with good Order and Government.

My Case, as I have sincerely set it forth, I humbly represent to the Clemency of my Governours, and to the charity, equity and candor of all Christs Ministers and People. I am sure I design to follow after the things which make for Peace; and I hope I am not mistaken in the way to it.

F. C.

F I N I S //

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